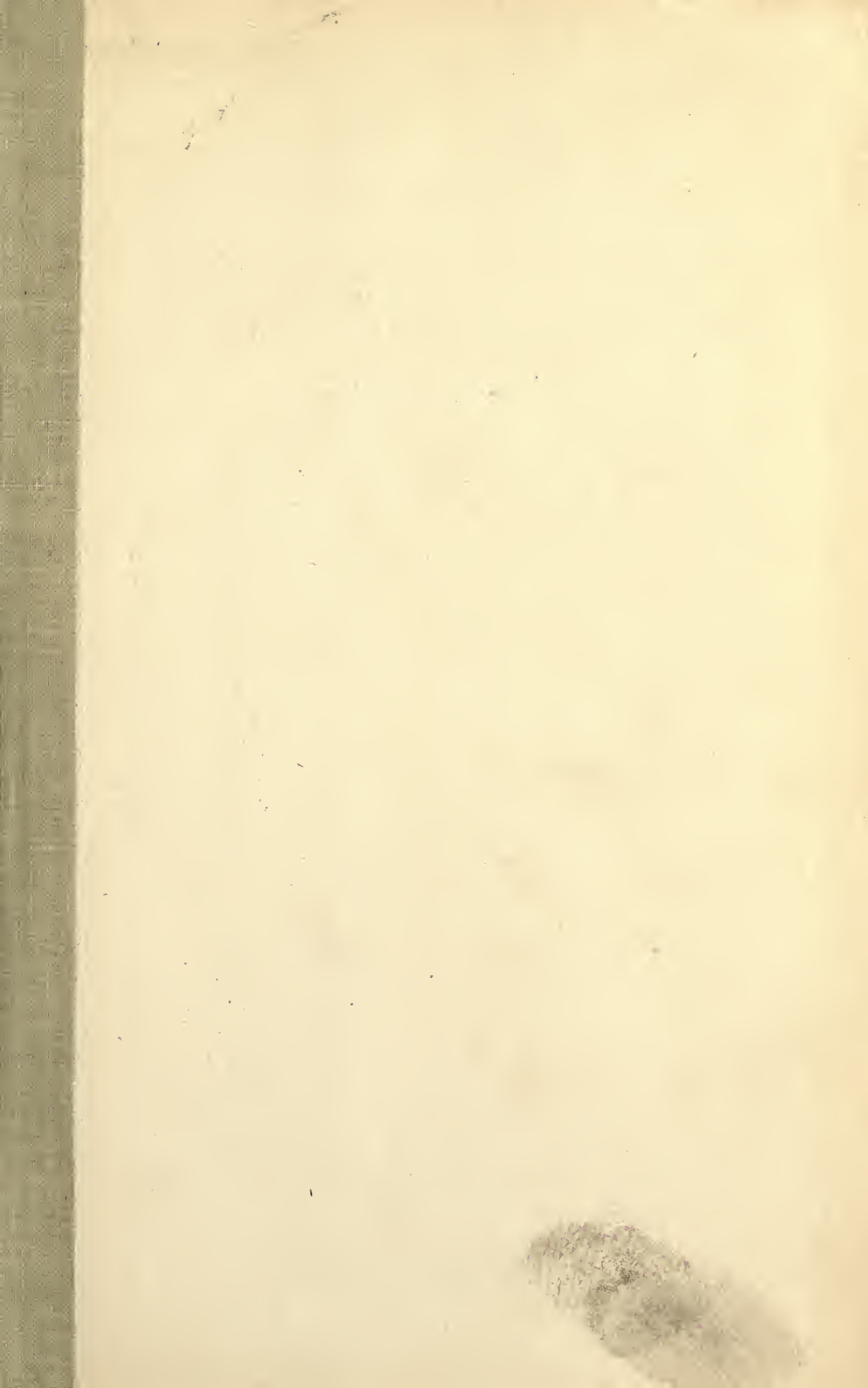
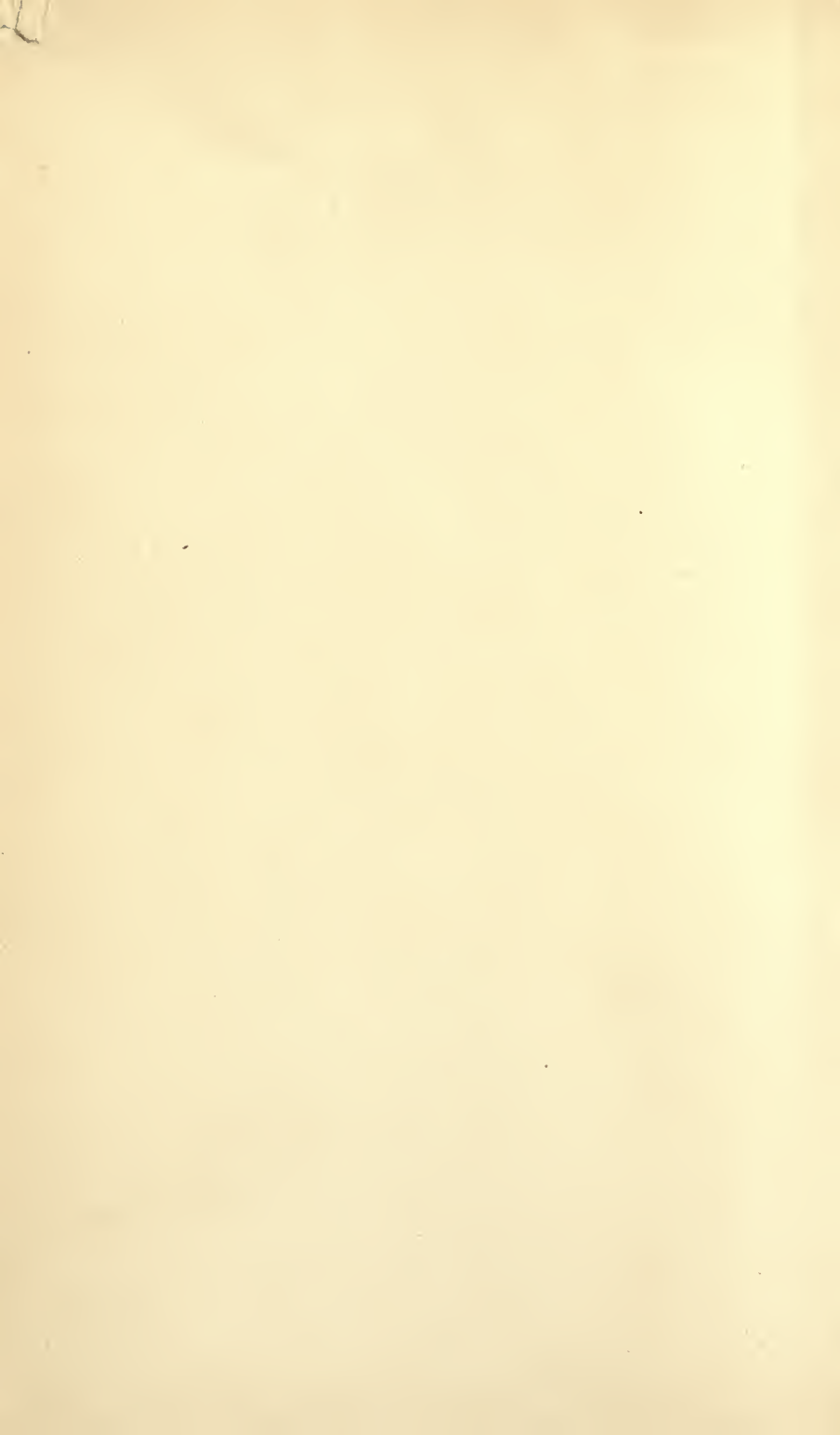


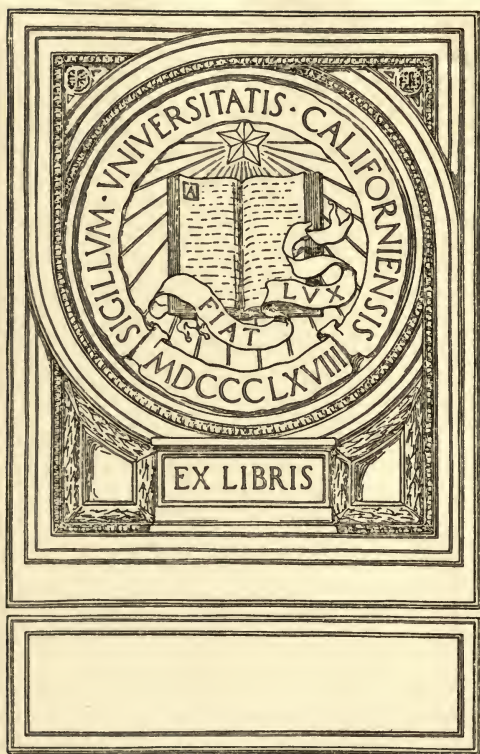
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**A PERSIAN  
PEARL**





# A PERSIAN PEARL

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY  
CLARENCE S. DARROW



CHICAGO  
C. L. RICKETTS  
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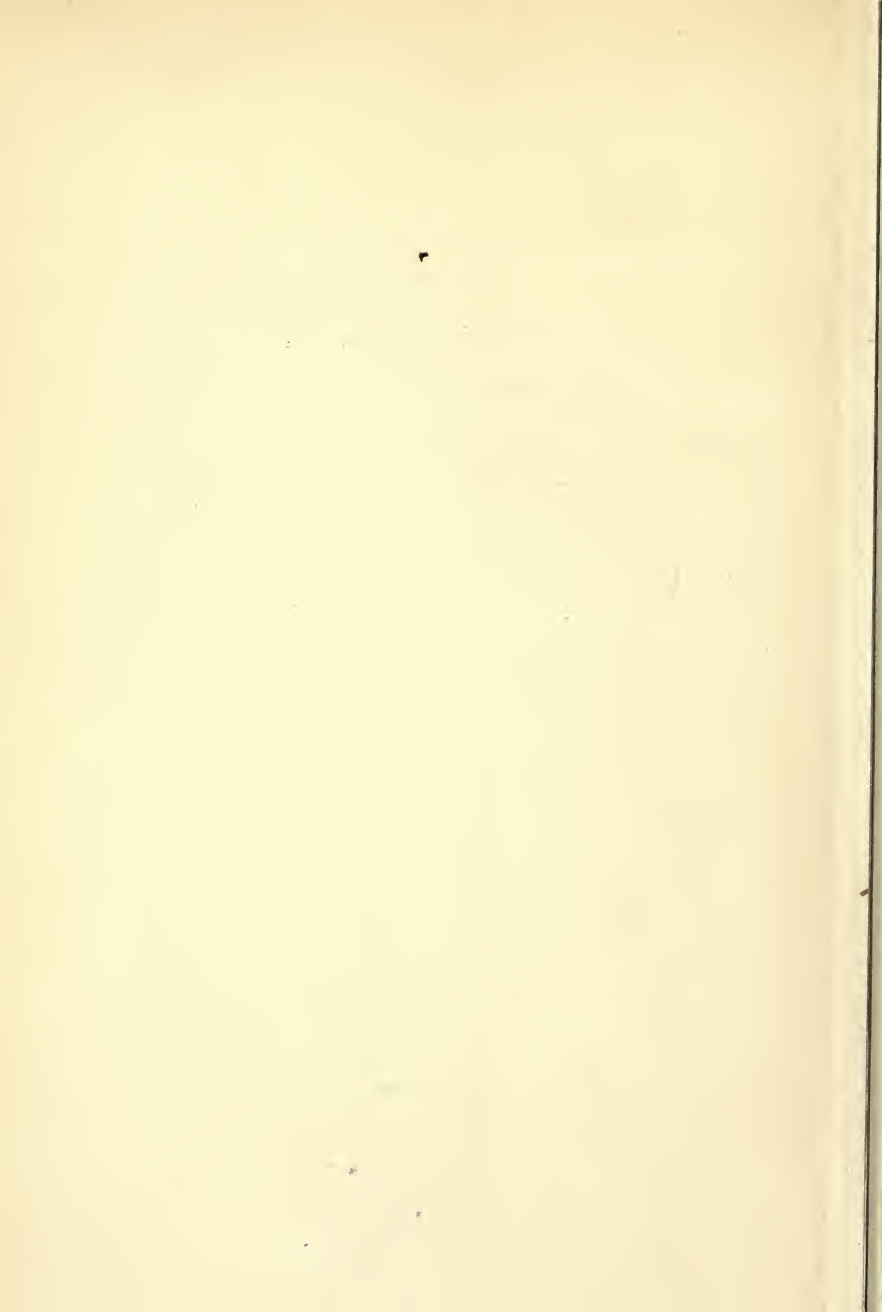
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# A · PERSIAN · PEARL







# A PERSIAN PEARL

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HE reader and observer is constantly reminded that "there is nothing new under the sun." We no sooner find some rare gem of thought or expression than we discover that it is only an old diamond, polished anew, perhaps, and offered as an original stone. Neither the reader nor the writer is always aware that the gem is antique and the setting alone is new.

The rich mine where the treasure was first found was exhausted in a few brief years, and then became like all the dust of all the worlds; but the gem polished and worn by time and use, ever sparkles and shines, regardless of the fact that the miner's name is forgotten and his work alone remains. Thus Nature, the great communist, provides that the treasures of genius, like her own bountiful gifts of sunlight, rain and air, shall remain the common property of all her children while any dwell upon the earth.

Current literature seems to point to the ascendancy of what is often termed the "pessimistic school." In one sense this

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philosophy uncrowns man and places him in his proper relation to the great universe, of which he is so small a part; but while it makes less of man, it expects less from him, and covers his deeds with that cloak of charity, which is the legitimate garment of the great Unknown. But these modern reflections on life and its problems, its purposes and lessons, are far from new. Without venturing a guess as to their origin or age, we take up that old Persian Pearl,—the “Rubaiyat,” and find on its musty pages the great thoughts and searching questions, which have ever returned to man since the intellect was born, and which will still remain unanswered when the last word shall have been spoken, and the race have run its course.

It is nearly eight hundred years since Omar Khayyam, the Persian astronomer, philosopher, and poet, mused and wrote upon the uncertainty of life, the eternity of time and the mutability of human things. Since the rose bush was planted above his grave, the material world has been almost made anew. Art and literature have given countless treasures to the earth, and science has solved its mysteries without end. But the riddles of existence—the problems of life,

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the deep heart of the universe, the cause and purpose and end of all, are mysteries as dark and inscrutable as they were eight centuries ago. To quote from the Rubaiyat :

There was the Door to which I found no Key;  
There was the Veil thro' which I could not see:  
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee  
There was—and then no more of Thee and Me.

As Egypt is the newest country visited by the traveler, so this old book, burnished by the genius of FitzGerald, comes to us as the latest and profoundest word upon the infinite mysteries which over-shadow human life. It seems to be the last word, rather than one of the first, spoken to the perplexed soul of man, calling him from the vain pursuit of vanities, and asking what all of it is about.

To an egoistic, boasting age and nation, this message, coming from a far off time and a distant land, reminds us that all wisdom is garnered neither now nor here. This Persian Pearl remained unpolished for more than seven hundred years. It was left for Edward FitzGerald carefully and patiently to burnish up the gem, and make it the thing of beauty that we know.

It may be that research and study would

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reveal much of the personal traits and private life of the great Persian philosopher, whose fame has so outlived his clay, but with these we can have no concern. It is not important to know his parents, or whether he had a wife or children, or cattle or lands. All of these are gone and only his work remains. True, we cannot but reflect on the personality of the poet in whose brain these great thoughts were born, but we can know the man only by knowing his works. Some there are who stand at a distance and view the acts of the imperfect beings, who at the best stumble and grope along the uncertain path between the cradle and the grave. All the footsteps that are straight and true are unnoticed as they pass by, but the irregular, uncertain, shifting tracks stand out alone to mark the character of the pilgrim, who bore his heavy load the best he could. These forget that every son of man travels an unbeaten path—a road beset with dangers and temptations that no other wanderer met; that his footsteps can be judged only in the full knowledge of the strength and light he had, the burden that he carried, the obstacles and temptations that he met, and a thorough knowledge of every open and secret motive that impelled him here or there.



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That Omar's steps were often winding and devious, and like those of all other mortal men, we gather from his words. No doubt his neighbors delighted in gossiping about the great philosopher, and his reputation was often tarnished by their idle words. These slanderers have been long forgotten—they could not live upon the great name they sullied, and we should not even know he was their prey except for lines like these:

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long  
Have done my credit in Men's eyes much wrong;  
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,  
And sold my reputation for a Song.

Eight hundred years ago, as to-day, the love of wine was one of the chief weaknesses of the flesh. Doubtless the other frailties of human nature are of substantially the same kind as eight centuries ago, for while man may change the fashion of his garment or religion, nature is ever consistent and persistent, and is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. But our old human philosopher, like our modern human men, saw the folly of his ways, and made many a brave resolve, but these good intentions and solemn purposes melted in the sunshine then the same as now.



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Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before  
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?

And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand  
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

But Omar was greater than most of the weak and sinning children of to-day. His own frailties taught him the rare lesson, that of all the virtues, charity is the chiefest! And as we read the wondrous product of his brain and understand the thoughts that stirred his being, we can know the man better than his neighbors who judged a great soul by the narrow vision of sordid minds. We know that his purpose was lofty, and above all the mists and conflicting emotions and desires of his life he rose majestic and supreme, unsullied by the specks that can only mar the weak. Let us turn then to the philosophy and poetry of this great soul to know the man, and as figs are not gathered of thistles, we may be sure that broad thoughts, high aspirations, and tender charity are born only of great minds and rare men.

— To Omar Khayyam, the so-called sins of men were not crimes, but weaknesses inherent in their being and beyond their power to prevent or overcome. He knew that man could not separate himself from all the rest

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of nature; and that the rules and conditions of his being were as fixed and absolute as the revolutions of the planets and the changing seasons of the year. Above man and his works he saw the heavy hand of destiny, ever guiding and controlling, ever moving its creature forward to the inevitable fate that all the centuries had placed in store for the helpless captive, marching shackled to the block.

There have ever been two views of life. Both philosophies have been made by man and mostly for him. One places him above all the rest of the universe, whose infinite mysteries are constantly revolving and changing before his hazy, wondering gaze. The portion of the world that comes nearest to his eyes he cannot understand, and his own existence is a riddle that all the ages have not solved. And yet, amidst it all, one system teaches that man rules supreme,—and the fate of all the worlds, or of all that may exist thereon, has no relation to his own. The other peers into the thick darkness that hangs above, and can see no light, it does not understand and will not guess; the endless mysteries are not for mortal man to solve. Its devotees feel themselves part of a mighty whole, and are powerless

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to separate their lives from all the rest, and would not dare to undertake it if they could. They know that in the great, unlimited universe they are less than the tiniest bubble in the wildest, angriest sea. That in the words of the Rubaiyat:

We are no other than a moving row  
Of magic Shadow-shapes that come and go  
Round with this Sun-illuminated Lantern held  
In Midnight by the Master of the Show.

Omar Khayyam was probably not the first, certainly not the last, to feel the impotence of man in the great power which animates the whole. He could have no faith in the cruel religious tenets, which eight centuries ago in Persia, as ever since in the Christian world, have taught the responsibility of the helpless victim for the great, blind work in which he had no part. He seemed to think that back of all the universe, some intelligent power moved and controlled the world for some purpose unknown to all except himself, but he could not think that man was in any way accountable for the whole. To him, the great master sent us here or there to suit his will, and it was left for us only to obey his mighty power. The individual units of humanity were to him only:

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Impotent Pieces of the Game He plays  
Upon this checker-board of Nights and Days;  
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

Even this does not sufficiently express his thought of man's absolute irresponsibility for his acts.

We have all met the parallel drawn between man and the pottery fashioned by the moulder from the clay. Perhaps there is no better illustration of the helplessness of the human being in the hands of the power that fashioned and shaped him, even ages before his birth,—the uncontrollable force that determined the length of his body, the color of his hair, the size and shape of his brain and the contour of his face. But the comparison made in the beautiful stanza wrought by Omar, and retouched and gilded by the magic of FitzGerald, is wondrously powerful and fine. The poet ranges his poor pieces of pottery in line, each representing a man; each imperfect in structure or form, like all the other creatures ever made. These poor, imperfect vessels, fresh from the potter, each pleads its cause and makes excuses for its faults.

After a momentary silence spake  
Some vessel of a more ungainly Make:  
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:  
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"



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When will humanity be great enough and good enough to distinguish between the fault of the potter and the fault of the pot! When can it look over the myriads of human beings, each with his flaws and limitations, and pity instead of blame!

The history of the past is a record of man's cruel inhumanity to man; of one imperfect vessel accusing and shattering another for the faults of both. In ancient times and amongst savage tribes, the old, the infirm, and the diseased were led out and put to death; even later, the maniac and imbecile were fettered, chained, beaten, and imprisoned because they were different from other men. The world has grown a little wiser, and perhaps humaner, as the centuries have passed away. We have learned to build asylums, and treat the afflicted with tenderness and care. We have learned not to blame the dwarf for his stature; the hunchback for his load; the deaf because they cannot hear, and the blind because they cannot see. We do not expect the midget to carry the giant's load, or the cripple to triumph in a contest of speed. We establish a regulation size for policemen and soldiers, but we do not put a man to death because his stature is below the stand-



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ard fixed. We forgive the size of the foot, the length of the arm, the shade of the hair, the color of the eye, and even the form of the skull. But, while we do not blame a man because he has an ill-shaped head, we punish him because the brain within conforms to the bone which molds its form. The world has made guns and swords, racks and dungeons, chains and whips, blocks and gibbets, and to these have dragged an endless procession thro' all the past. It has penned and maimed, tortured and killed, because the potter's work was imperfect and the clay was weak. During all the ages it has punished mental deformity as a crime, and without pity or regret has crushed the imperfect vessels beneath its feet. Every jail, every scaffold, every victim—is a monument to its cruelty and blind unreasoning wrath. Whether it was a fire kindled to burn a heretic in Geneva,—a gibbet erected to kill a witch in Salem,—or a scaffold made to put to death an ordinary "criminal," it has ever been the same,—the punishment of the creature for the creator's fault. There might be some excuse if man could turn from the frail, cracked vessels, and bring to trial the great potter for the imperfect work of his hand.

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But we live in the shadows; we can see only the causes and effects that are the closest to our eyes. If the clouds would rise, and the sun shine bright, and our vision reach out into time and space, we might find that these cracked vessels serve as high a purpose in a great, broad scheme, as the finest clay, wrought in the most beautiful and perfect form. The following stanza was born of this philosophy and would inevitably come from the broad, charitable brain that had studied the creeds that told of the cruelty of the great Maker, but whose brain and conscience had not been stunted and warped by their palsying dogmas:

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy  
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;  
And he that with his hand the Vessel made  
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

The cruel religious dogmas, which in Omar's land and Age, as in our own, blackened both man and his Maker, had no terrors for a soul like his. He could not believe in eternal punishment. The doctrine was a slander, alike to God and man. He felt something of the greatness of a force that could permeate and move the countless worlds, which make up the limitless, unfath-

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omed infinite we call the Universe. He saw in man one of the smallest and most insignificant toys created by this power to serve some unknown end; and he could not believe that the Master-BUILDER would demand of his imperfect children more than he had furnished them the strength to give. His faith in the justice of man's case before the great Judge is shown in the following stanza:

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round  
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

But even more strongly he presents the case of God against man, and man against God, for all the crimes and miseries and sufferings of the world. It would doubtless be difficult in all the literature of the earth to find a juster, bolder statement of the old question of the responsibility for sin. To some minds, this strong expression may seem like blasphemy, but it is manly and courageous, logical and just.

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make  
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake;  
For all the Sin wherewith the face of Man  
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

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This is not the cringing prayer of the coward, who asks God's forgiveness to appease his wrath, but the utterance of a noble soul, who asks forgiveness for the shortcomings of his life, and at the same time pardons his Maker for creating him as he did. The world has heard much of man's duty to God, of the responsibility which the unconsulted, fragile children of a day owe to the power that is responsible for all. It is time we heard more of the duty of God to man; the responsibility of the Creator for making "conscious something" out of unthinking, unfeeling clay.

"Oh, many a cup of this forbidden Wine  
Must drown the memory of that insolence!"

The world has talked the same nonsense of the duty of children to parents. It has taught this, because parents are larger, and have the brute power to compel obedience to their demands. All the duties are from parents to children,—from those who thoughtlessly, wantonly, to satisfy their own desires, call into conscious being a human life,—send another soul with all its responsibilities out on the great, wide sea, to be tossed and buffeted and torn, until, mangled and dead, it is thrown out upon the sands to bleach.

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But after all, whether it was wise or unwise, just or unjust, we have been placed upon the earth as sentient beings and charged with the responsibilities of life; and practical philosophy asks the question, what does it mean, and how shall we take the journey which a higher power has decreed that we shall make?

The poet and the dreamer and the copy book have told us much of the meaning of life. We often repeat these lessons to make ourselves believe them true. When we feel a doubt casting its shadow across our path, we read them once again to drive the doubt away; and yet, in spite of all, we know absolutely nothing of the scheme, or whether there is any kind of plan. We are only whistlers passing through a graveyard, with our ears tied close and our eyes shut fast. It would surely be as well to step boldly up and read the inscription on the marble tomb and then walk round and look at the vacant, grinning space upon the other side, calmly waiting to record our name.

Measured by the philosophy of to-day, Omar Khayyam was a pessimist; he was not gifted with second sight. He saw no spooks and ghosts, and he would not look out into the midnight, and declare that his eyes dis-



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cerned a glorious rainbow, bright with fresh colors and unbounded hopes. All the proud promises and brave assumptions and false theories of the world were to him a mockery and a sham. The mysticisms of religion and philosophy alike were hollow and bare. The "jarring sects" and quibbling doctors, with their fine-spun webs, were worthy the attention only of children and professors. This is the way he put them down :

Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument  
About it and about ; but evermore  
Came out by the same door wherein I went.

While it is true that in the common meaning Omar was a pessimist, still this word, like many others, is rarely well defined. All men understand the uncertainties of life, the disappointments and troubles of existence, and the infinitesimal time that is reluctantly parceled out to each mortal from the eternity that had no beginning and will have no end. The pessimist looks at all the hurry and rush, the torment and strife, the ambitions and disappointments that are the common lot, and can see no prizes so tempting as rest and peace. He makes the most of what he has, and looks contentedly for-

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ward to the long sleep that brings relief at last.

Omar Khayyam was not deceived by all the glitter and bustle of the world. He saw the stage from behind the curtain, as well as from the circle before the scenes. He looked on the great surging mass of men, ever pulling and pushing, striving and trying, working and fighting, as if all eternity was theirs in which to build, and all unmindful of the silent bookkeeper, who could be deceived by no false entries, and ever remembered to demand his dues. Of life he said :

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest  
A Sultan to the Realm of Death address ;  
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash  
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

In the presence of all that the world had to offer,—while honors and glories fell fast upon his head, he still could not close his eyes to the facts of existence, and the mortality of human things. It may be that he mused too much upon the great fact that ever sternly faces life,—the great being before whom all monarchs bow, and in whose presence all crowns are shattered. To the boasting and forgetful, these words may not be pleasant, but they still are true :



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Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd  
Of the Two worlds so learnedly are thrust  
Like foolish Prophets forth; their words to Scorn  
Are scatter'd and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

Neither the great nor the good could  
avoid the common fate; the unyielding  
messenger came alike to call the proud Sul-  
tan and the good and kindly friend.

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best  
That from his Vintage rolling Time has prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest.

Death is so common that we sometimes  
wonder why men make plans,—why they  
ever toil or spin. But, of course, we can see  
only the leaves that fall from other stalks.  
Rarely do we feel that all this has a personal  
meaning, and that our turn soon must come.  
Omar looked at the stricken friends around  
him, and thus mused:

Whether at Naishapur or Babylon,  
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,  
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,  
The leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

It has never required the great or the  
learned to note the constant falling of the  
leaves and the ceaseless running of the sands.  
It is mainly from this that systems of religion

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have been evolved. Man has ever sought to make himself believe that these things are not what they seem ; that, in reality, death is only birth, and the body but a prison for the soul. This may be true, but the constant cries and pleadings of the ages have brought back no answering sound to prove that death is anything but death.

Our old philosopher could not accept these pleasing creeds on faith. He preferred to plant his feet upon the shifting doubtful sands, rather than deceive himself by alluring and delusive hopes. Upon the old question of immortality, he could answer only what he knew, and this is what he said :

Strange, is it not ? that of the myriads who  
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through  
Not one returns to tell us of the Road  
Which to discover we must travel too.

This stanza is perhaps gloomy and hopeless, but it is thoughtful, and brave, and beautiful. We may seek to be children if we will, but whatever our desires, we cannot strangle the questions that ever rise before our minds and will not be put away. To our own souls we should be just and true. Peace and comfort, when gained at

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the sacrifice of courage and integrity, are purchased at too high a price. The truth alone can make us free, and

“ One flash of it within the tavern caught  
Better than in the Temple lost outright.”

Yes, one flash of the true light is better than all the creeds and dogmas. It is better, even though these hold out the fairest prospects and the brightest dreams, and the flash of true light is only the blackest midnight.

Not only would Omar take away the hope of Heaven, but he leaves us with little to boast while we live upon the earth. Our short, obscure existence is not felt or noticed in the great sweep of time and the resistless movement of the years. Along the pathway of the world we leave scarce a footprint, and our loudest voice and bravest words are as completely lost as if spoken in the presence of Niagara's roar.

And fear not lest Existence closing your  
Account and mine, should know the like no more ;  
The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has pour'd  
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

The weakness and littleness of man has been the subject of endless words before and since, but never has poet put it more strongly than here. The Eternal Saki—the

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great wine pourer, tips his pitcher and turns out millions of bubbles, and still they come forever, and each of us is one.

But however brave and stoical Omar seems to be, still he feels sad when witnessing the flight of years and the ravages of time. It is, of course, useless to fight the inevitable, and the strongest will must bend and break before the weakening touch of age. Whether it is good or bad, all cling to existence, and sadly and reluctantly let go the tendrils that hold to pulsing life. The fading of Spring and youth, and the coming of Autumn with its suggestions of the approaching end, is most beautiful and touching in this marvelous book :

Yet, Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!  
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!  
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,  
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

This strain of sadness is sincere and true. To recognize the inevitable and not pretend to deceive one's self is one thing, but to think that all is just and wise and best may be quite another. Omar felt that fate was inexorable, relentless and hard.

The moving Finger writes; and having writ,  
Moves on; nor all your piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,  
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

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He would have tempered her hardness with a little human love and tender pity, and bade the great Recorder leave much untold. He recognized the fact that the scheme could not be changed, and that even our brief existence depended upon our subservience to the great will that would neither break nor bend; but he still regretted that it was not better and kinder and more forgiving than it is. There is almost a wail in the strain of sadness in which he laments the rigor of unyielding fate.

Would that some winged Angel ere too late  
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of fate,  
And make the stern Recorder otherwise  
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

Ah Love! could you and I with him conspire  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,  
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire?

It is impossible to live to a moderate age without forming some idea of the conduct of life; this may be practical or theoretical, or both. But either with or without consciousness we construct some plan of life and its purpose, and our daily conduct conforms more or less closely to the theory that we accept. The religionist teaches that the hope of future rewards and punishments



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must be kept before the mind, or man would give himself completely to indulgence, and the race would die. This theory loses sight of the fact that Nature herself is constantly wiping out those who defy her laws, and preserving longest those who conform to the conditions she has imposed. Excesses of all kinds destroy and weaken existence, and bring the natural penalty, which leaves only the more rational and temperate to perpetuate life upon the earth. Of course these observations apply, not to the fashions and forms and conventions of man, except so far as these conform to the unbending laws of nature, which must ever be supreme.

From Omar Khayyam's views of life, he could not but think that it was the duty of every pilgrim to get the most he could in his journey through the world. But, really, all accept this obvious fact. The Religionist says merely that man should be less happy here,—that his enjoyment may be the greater in the world to come. It is not in the theory as to life's purpose that men have differed, but as to the conduct that really brings the greatest happiness when the last balance has been struck, and the book is forever closed. Our poet could not see the days and years go by and life's sands swiftly

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running out, and still postpone all enjoyment to some far off, misty time. He believed in the reality of to-day, and that beyond the present all was but a vision and a dream. In his day, as in ours, the priests held out the hope of heaven and fear of hell, to keep the wanderer in the narrow path. But Omar was a philosopher and astronomer. He peered into the infinite depths of endless space, and could see only moving, whirling worlds like ours, and could find no place for heaven or hell. What the mysteries of astronomy could not reveal, the theories of life left equally in the dark. While he refused to be moved by a literal heaven and hell, he yet felt a deep meaning attached to these old religious views. The humane, progressive thinkers of to-day have scarcely gone beyond this old seer, who lived eight centuries ago and pondered the same problems over which our theologians wrangle now. The following stanza gives an interpretation of these religious dogmas, which for beauty and breadth and insight seems to be the latest product of ethical, religious thought, instead of the musty musings of an old pagan, who has been dust almost eight hundred years:

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,  
Some letter of that After-Life to spell;  
And by and by my Soul returned to me,  
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell."



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If these places are but states of consciousness, it of course must follow that we make our own heaven and hell, and it is, therefore, the right and duty of each, not to wait for some dreamy mirage born of old superstition, unmanly fear, and unfounded faith, but to take the present, fleeting moment, and with it do the best we can. This stanza may seem painfully sad and hopeless, but it contains the true philosophy of life :

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,  
Before we too into the Dust descend ;  
Dust unto Dust, and under Dust, to lie,  
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End !

Not only is the present the all important time, but the realities know nothing except the present. There is no moment but the one that's here,—the past is gone, the next one has not come, and he that misses the present loses all there is.

Some for the Glories of This World, and some  
Sigh for the Prophet's paradise to come ;  
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,  
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum !

As to how the pleasures of life are to be found, men never have agreed and never can. Our view of pleasure, like our feelings and emotions, grows from the condition

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of our being, and is the result of causes that we did not create and cannot control. Some there are who look at all the strife and suffering of the world, and feel no kinship to the great, surging mass that moves and feels and thinks. These walk silently along the path alone, oblivious alike to the pleasures and the sufferings of the world around. Others there are whose souls are so sensitive that they feel the joys and sorrows of the world, and who cannot separate their lives from all the sentient, moving things that teem and swarm upon the earth. Both can and must feel those appetites and desires that are ever incident to being. Without these, nature could neither bring life upon the earth nor sustain it when it came. It is in the balancing of these feelings that nature almost necessarily makes the imperfect man. Unless the emotions and desires are sufficiently developed, the creature is cold, impassive, pulseless clay. If too much developed, it runs the risk of sacrificing the higher emotions and more lasting enjoyments to the fleeting, sensual pleasures of the hour. Almost every person must stand upon one side or the other of this shadowy line, which no man can see, and which he would have no power to cross, even if he knew where it ran.

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Perhaps the Rubaiyat shows too much leaning toward the sensual; too great fondness for the vine. Some of the allusions were perhaps symbolical, but still, Omar doubtless was very fond of wine and found in its use one of the chief purposes of life. Philosophy and theology could not satisfy his mind. These furnished only visionary, inconsistent theories of existence, utterly barren and futile,—wholly purposeless and wrong. After studying and wrangling and disputing, he threw them to the winds and reached out for the realities,—however transitory and unsatisfactory these realities seemed to be. His exchange of theories and mysticisms for wine may be symbolical or not, but whether literal or figurative, he could hardly be cheated by the trade. This is the way he relates the story of his change of heart:

You know, My Friends, with what a brave Carouse  
I made a Second Marriage in my house;  
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,  
And took the Daughter of the Vine to spouse.

After throwing the theoretical philosophy to the winds, he turned to the vine to learn what life really meant. No doubt, the vessel here is figuratively used. It might mean

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a wine cup, it might mean feeding a beggar, it might mean a warm room and comfortable dress. It meant something besides the intangible, barren theories, which have ever furnished theologians and professors with the pleasing occupation of splitting hairs and quibbling about the meaning of terms.

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn  
I lean'd, the secret of my Life to learn;  
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live,  
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

Neither would it do to postpone the pleasures of the wine,—time is fleeting, and every hour may be the last. Life has no space for resolutions or regrets. These only rob existence of a portion of the poor prizes that she stingily scatters into the ring to be fought and scrambled after by the crowd.

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring  
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling;  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

It is not the dainty sipping of the wine that our poet commends for the peace of the soul, but the giving up of self to the enjoyment of the hour,—the complete aban-

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donment that forgets time and space and eternity, and knows only the moment that is.

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,  
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,  
And lose your fingers in the tresses of  
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

This stanza may mean wine,—it may mean any strong purpose, or intense emotion that takes possession of our life,—that makes us its devoted slave, anxious to dare or suffer for the privilege of enlisting in a cause. That Omar knew something of life's pleasures and realities, besides the wine he lauded, is apparent from his work. His insight was so deep that he could not be deceived by the tinsel and glitter and trappings that make up the vain show with which men deceive others, and attempt to beguile themselves. In Persia eight hundred years ago, there were probably no twenty-story buildings, no railroads, nor street cars, nor telegraph wires; perhaps no chambers of commerce, nor banks; but no doubt these old Mohammedans had much as useless and vain and artificial as these inventions of a later day. There was then, as now, the master with all the false luxury that idleness could create in that land and time; there



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was also, as to-day, the hopeless slave, whose only purpose on the earth was to minister to the parasite and knave; and both of these, master and man alike, were helpless prisoners in the schemes and devices, the machinery and inventions, the worthless appendages and appliances that bound and enslaved them, and that have held the world with ever increasing strength to the present day.

But Omar knew that all of this was a delusion and a snare;—that it failed of the purpose that it meant to serve. He turned from these vanities to a simpler, saner life, and found the sweetest and most lasting pleasures close to the heart of that great nature, to which man must return from all his devious wanderings, like the lost child that comes back to its mother's breast. What simpler and higher happiness has all the artificial civilization of the world been able to create than this:

A Book of Verses underneath the bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow.

It is these bright spots in life's desert that make us long to stay. These hours of friendship and close companionship of congenial souls that seem the only pleasures

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that are real, and from which no regrets can come. It is away from the bustle and glare of the world, above its petty strifes, and its cruel taunts, in the quiet and trust of true comradeship, that we forget the evil and fall in love with life. And our old philosopher, with all his pessimism, with all his doubts and disappointments, knew that here was the greatest peace and happiness that weary, mortal man could know. In the presence of the friends he loved, and the comradeship of congenial lives, he could not but regret the march of time and the flight of years, which heralded the coming of the end. Poor Omar was like all the rest that ever lived—he looked forward into the dark, unknown sea, and shuddered as he felt the rising water on his feet.

All of us know how small and worthless are our lives when measured by the infinite bubbles poured out by the great creative power. All know that we shall quickly sink into the great dark sea and the waves will close above us as if we had not been. And yet we do not really think of the world as moving on the same when we have spoken our last lines and retired behind the scenes. To the world we are little,—to ourselves we are all. We almost hope that for a time at



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least we shall be missed,—that some souls shall sorrow and some lives feel pain. We hope that here and there some pilgrim will tell of a burden that we helped him bear, or a road we tried to smooth. That sometime when the merry feast is on, a former friend shall feel a momentary shadow rest upon his heart at the thought of the face he used to know and the voice that now is still. Thus Omar and FitzGerald mused and hoped and told in beautiful, pathetic lines:

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—  
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;  
How oft hereafter rising look for us  
Through this same Garden—and for one in vain!

And when like her, O Saki, you shall pass  
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,  
And in your blissful errand reach the spot  
Where I made one—turn down an empty Glass!

WALT  
WHITMAN





## WALT WHITMAN



HE work of Whitman stands alone in the literature of the world. Both in substance and construction he ignored all precedents and dared to be himself. All the rules of form and taste must be unlearned before the world can accept his style as true literary art. Still it may be that Walt Whitman was a poet, and that sometime the world will look back and marvel at the mechanical precision and glittering polish that confines and emasculates for the sake of a purely artificial form.

Measured by the common rules, Whitman's work is neither poetry nor prose; it is remotely allied to the wild chanting of the primitive bards, who looked about at the fresh new marvels of earth and sky and sea, and unhampered by forms and rules and customs, sang of the miracles of the universe and the mysteries of life. Whitman seems one of those old bards, fresh from the hand of nature, young with the first creation, the newest handwork of the great Master, untaught in any schools, unfettered by any of the myriad chords, which time is ever weaving about the brains and

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hearts and consciences of men as the world grows gray; a primitive bard of nature, born by some chance or accident in this old, tired, worn-out world, dropped into this Nineteenth century with its machines and conventions, its artificial life, its unnatural morals and its fettered limbs. He alone in all the ages seems to have been specially given to the world, still fresh with the imprint of the Creator's hand, and standing amid all our false conventions, natural, simple, true, "naked and not ashamed." To the world with its crowded cities, its diseased bodies, its unnatural desires, its narrow religion, and its false morals, he comes like a breeze of the morning, from the mountains or the sea. Aye, like a breath of that great, creative life, which touched the fresh world and brought forth the green grass, the sparkling waters and the growing, beauteous, natural earth.

No one ever fell in love with Whitman's work for its literary art, but his work must live or die because of his philosophy of life and the material he chose from which to weave his songs. It is in his whole point of view that Walt Whitman stands so much alone. No one else has ever looked on the universe and life as this man did. If reli-

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gion means devotion to that great unseen power that is ever manifest in all of nature's works, then Walt Whitman was the most reverent soul that ever lived. This man alone of all the world dared defend the Creator in every part and parcel of his work. The high mountains, the deep valleys, the broad plains and the wide seas; the feelings, the desires, and the passions of man; all forms of life and being that exist upon the earth, were to him but several manifestations of a great creative power that formed them all alike, made each one needful to the whole, and every portion sacred through its Master's stamp.

And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present and can be none in the future,

And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turn'd to beautiful results,

And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death.

And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and events are compact,

And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts.

But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to ensemble,

And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference to all days.



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Whitman's philosophy knew no evil and no wrong. The fact of existence proved the right of existence; in the great workshop of nature every tool had its special use and its rightful place.

The imperfections of the world come from the narrow visions of men. If the perspective is right, the universe is right. From the narrow valley the house may look old and worn, the fences decayed, the fields barren, the woods scraggy and the cliff ragged and bare; but climb to the only place where either life or landscape can be rightly seen, the mountain top, and look once more. The hills, the valley, the stream, the woods, and the farms have melted and blended into one harmonious whole, and every imperfection has been swept away. The universe is filled with myriad worlds as important as our own, each one a tiny floating speck in an endless sea of space—each whirling, turning, moving on and on and on, through the countless ages, past and yet to come. No one can tell the purpose of their tireless, endless flight through space; but still we know that each has an orbit of its own, and every world is related to the rest, and every grain of sand and the weakest, feeblest spark of power has

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its needful place in the balance of the whole. So all of good, and all of bad, and all of life, and all of death, and all of all, has the right to be and must needs be. Walt Whitman did not even know how to divide the evil from the good, but he sang them both alike.

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to  
be the poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice ?

Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand  
indifferent.

The universe can make no mistakes, every particle of energy that has permeated the world since time began, has been working toward a completer system and a more harmonious whole. There is a soul of truth in error; there is a soul of good in evil. From the trials and sorrows and disappointments of life, even from its bitterness and doubt and sin, are often born the holiest desires, the sincerest endeavors and the most righteous deeds.

Sometimes with one I love I fill myself with rage for  
fear I effuse unreturn'd love,

But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is  
certain one way or another,

(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not  
return'd,

Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

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This is the old, old philosophy, ever forgotten, yet ever present. It is sure in the world of mechanics, it is equally true in the world of morals and of life. Nothing is lost; the force that once was heat is transformed to light; the flood that destroyed the grain, comes at last to turn the miller's wheel. What we call sin and evil make the experiences of life and go to the upbuilding of character and the development of man. We can know only what we have felt, and however much we try to deceive others, we can tell only of the experiences we ourselves have had. The poorest life is the one that has no tale to tell. In the doubts and darkness of life, in the turbulence of mind and the anguish of the soul, it is most consoling to feel that resignation and confidence which comes from a realization that all is right and that you are master of yourself and at peace with God and man. This calm, optimistic, self-reliant philosophy is ever present with its consoling power in all Walt Whitman's work.

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,  
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self  
is,  
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks  
to his own funeral drest in his shroud,

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And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the  
pick of the earth,

And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod  
confounds the learning of all times,

And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for  
the wheel'd universe,

And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand  
cool and composed before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
For I who am curious about each, am not curious  
about God,

(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace  
about God and about death).

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand  
God not in the least,

Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful  
than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four  
and each moment then,

In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my  
own face in the glass,

I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one  
is sign'd by God's name,

And I leave them where they are, for I know that where-  
soe'er I go,

Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

This is not the boasting of the ignorant  
egotist who vaunts himself above his fellow  
man, but the calm, conscious serenity of a  
great soul, who has learned the patient phi-  
losophy of life.

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There is an egotism that is cheap and vulgar and born of ignorance alone. There is an egotism that comes from the knowledge that after all what we are depends not upon the estimate of the world, but upon the integrity and character of ourselves. This consciousness of individual worth brings that peace of soul, "which the world can neither give nor take away."

I know I am august,  
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood,  
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,  
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house by, after all),  
I exist as I am, that is enough,  
If no other in the world be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is myself;  
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or ten million years,  
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can wait.

My foothold is tennon'd and mortis'd in granite,  
I laugh at what you call dissolution,  
And I know the amplitude of time.

Happy is the man that has climbed to the height on which Walt Whitman stood.  
Happy is he that has mastered the haste and



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impatience of youth, and is content to bide his time. Happy is he that has so far solved the problem of life as to know that reward is not received from others and cannot be withheld by others, but can be given only by ourselves. Such a man has struck the subtle harmony which unites his soul with the universal life and he knows that no one but himself can cut the cord.

To a great mass of men and women, Walt Whitman is known almost alone by that portion of his work called "Children of Adam." These poems have called forth the fiercest opposition and the bitterest denunciation, and if the common judgment is correct, they are obscene and vile. While this portion of his book is by far the smallest part, still, before the court of public opinion, he must stand or fall upon these lines. In one sense public opinion is right, for unless these stanzas can be defended, his point of view is wrong, and Walt Whitman's work will die. We need not accept all he did, or give unstinted praise to all his work, but his scheme is consistent in every portion of his thought, and his point of view will determine the place he shall fill in art and life.

It is in this work that the courage and per-

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sonality of Whitman towers so high above every other man that ever wrote. It is easy for the essayist to speak in general terms and glittering phrases in defense of Whitman's work. His defenders have been many, but he alone has had the courage to speak.

It is not difficult to insist that his "A Woman Waits for Me" is a tremendous work, and as pure as nature's generating power. Still perhaps few would dare to read it aloud in an assembly of men and women. If Whitman is right, the world is wrong. This poem, and others of its like, in plain words deals of the deepest, strongest, most persistent feelings that move the sentient world. In proportion as they are deeper and stronger than any other, they should the more be the subject of thought and art. And still ages of established convention have made the world pretend ignorance until no one dares defend his right to life but this brave and simple man.

In both England and America, narrow interpretations of morality have almost stifled art. As remarked by a leading novelist—"All our literature is addressed to the young school girl." If it will not pass muster before her eyes, it has no right to live, and al-

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most no English or American author has been great enough to rise above these narrow conventions and write the natural and true. The artists of continental Europe have been less fettered and have taken us over a broader range and a wider field. Still while these authors have told more of life, they have treated these tremendous subjects by drawing the curtain only a little way aside, and giving us a curious, perverted, half stolen look, as if they knew that the picture was unholy and therefore tempting to the gaze. But Walt Whitman approached the human body and the mysteries of life from an entirely different view.

If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred,  
And the glory and sweet of man is the token of man-  
hood untainted,  
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body,  
is more beautiful than the most beautiful face.

If Walt Whitman could have drawn the veil from the universe and shown us the living God in all his majesty and power, he would have approached his throne with no greater reverence than when he stripped the human body and pointed to its every part fresh and sacred from its Maker's hand.

No true system of life and morals will ex-

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ist until the holiest feelings and most potent and eternal power is openly recognized and discussed with neither jest nor shame.

Walt Whitman was the great bard of democracy and equality; not simply the vulgar democracy of political rights and promiscuous familiarity, but the deep, broad, fundamental democracy that looks at all of nature and feels the unity and kinship that makes the universe a whole.

To Walt Whitman there could be no thought of class or caste. Each one held his certificate of birth from the same infinite power that, through all the ages and all the false and criminal distinctions of man, has yet decreed that all shall enter helpless and naked through the same gateway of birth, and each alike must go back to the fundamental mother, shorn of every distinction that man in his vain-glorious pride has sought to make. Whitman placed the works of nature above the works of man. He had no faith in those laws and institutions which the world has ever made to defraud, and enslave, and deny the common brotherhood of all. He believed that every child that came upon the earth was legitimate, and had an equal right to land, and sea, and air, and all that nature made, and all that nature gave.

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Each of us is inevitable,  
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right  
    upon the earth,  
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,  
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

Let this stanza speak to our conscience face to face—is it true or false? Can any but a blasphemer deny the divine right of every man upon the earth? And yet if this simple stanza is true, every law book should be burned and every court abolished and natural justice, unfettered and undenied, should be enthroned above the forms and conventions and laws, which, each and all, deny the integrity of the soul and the equal rights of man.

Through all the injustice and inequality of the world, the vision of democracy has still prevailed and ever must prevail as long as nature brings forth and takes back the master and the slave alike. But the aspiration for democracy is not always high and noble. It is easy to demand for ourselves the same rights enjoyed by our fellow men, but Whitman's democracy was on a higher plane.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy

By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have  
    their counterpart of on the same terms.



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These lines breathe the spirit of true humanity, the spirit that will one day remove all barriers and restrictions, and liberate the high and low alike. For nothing is truer in life or more inevitable in the economy of nature than this sage thought:

Whatever degrades another degrades me,  
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

It is a sad mistake to believe that injustice and wrong can injure only the poor and the weak. Every mean word and narrow thought and selfish act degrades the aggressor, leaves its mark upon his soul and its penalty in his life. So, too, no good effort is really lost, however it may seem to be. The kind word may be spoken to the deaf, the righteous effort be wrongly directed, the alms unworthily bestowed, but the heart that feels and the soul that tries has grown greater by the act.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,  
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him,  
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him,  
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,  
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,  
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him,—  
it cannot fail,

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The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor  
and actress, not to the audience,  
And no man understands any greatness or goodness but  
his own, or the indication of his own.

Not alone in his theory of personal equality was Walt Whitman a democrat in the highest meaning of the term, but he distrusted the ease and effeminacy of modern life; he doubted and feared the polish and super-sensitiveness that precedes decay; he had no faith in hot-house plants, in pampered life, in luxury and repose. He believed in rugged, primeval nature, in the rocks and hills, the rivers and the pines; he loved the dumb and patient brute, and believed in stalwart men and strong women; in sunlight, rain and air.

I am enamour'd of growing out of doors,  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or  
woods,  
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders  
of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses,  
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.  
I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so  
placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them and long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their  
sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,

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Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the  
mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived  
thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

Walt Whitman's work is not of the old, time-worn sort. When he speaks of love it is the love of life, the love of reality, the strong love of men, the intense love of women, the honest love that nature made, the love that is; not the unhealthy, immoral, false, impossible love told in erotic prose and more erotic verse, and given to young girls and boys as the truth, to poison and corrupt with its false and vicious views of life.

But he sings of the common things, the democracy of every day; for it is the small affairs that make up life, and its true philosophy is to see the beauty and greatness and relation of these little things and not to pine for the seemingly momentous events, which can rarely come. The Alexanders, the Cæsars and the Napoleons are scattered only here and there in the great sea of human existence, and yet every life measured by just standards may be as great as these; and the soul that is conscious of its own integrity knows its own worth regardless of the world.

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I do not call one greater and one smaller,  
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Walt Whitman felt the music of the hammer and the axe as he felt the harmony of the symphonies of Beethoven, and he understood the art of the plough-boy in the field as well as the glorious creations of Millet.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,  
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall  
take me with him all day,  
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the  
sound of my voice,  
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen  
and seamen and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,  
On the night ere the pending battle may seek me, and I  
do not fail them,  
On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that  
know me seek me,  
My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down  
alone in his blanket,  
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his  
wagon,  
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,  
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget  
where they are,  
They and all would resume what I have told them.

Walt Whitman's democracy did not end with sex. Man is not always a logical ani-

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mal. Most of the practical democracy of the world has stopped with men, and generally with white men at that. The political equality of woman has only barely been considered; the still more important question, her economic independence, is yet a far-off dream. But Walt Whitman knew no limit to equality. With him equality meant equality. It could mean nothing else.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of  
men.

Probably Walt Whitman would not have raised his hat to a woman on the street, nor given her his seat in the car, simply because she was a woman. Both these may be well enough, but they grow from false ideas of women and of course through these false ideas women lose the most. Injustice and oppression can never be made up by chivalry and pretended courtesy. And the evil always is and must be the false relation which these create. Men expect to pay women for their political and economic freedom in theater tickets and by taking off their hats in public, and in the end women become willing to receive this paltry and debasing bribe.



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“The Open Road,” one of Whitman’s master-pieces, is full of wholesome inclusive democracy.

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I  
choose.

Henceforth I ask not good fortune, I myself am good  
fortune,  
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need  
nothing  
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,  
I do not want the constellations any nearer,  
I know they are very well where they are,  
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

Here the profound lessons of reception, nor preference  
nor denial,  
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas’d,  
the illiterate person, are not denied ;  
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar’s  
tramp, the drunkard’s stagger, the laughing party  
of mechanics,  
The escaped youth, the rich person’s carriage, the fop,  
the eloping couple,  
The early market men, the hearse, the moving of furniture  
into the town, the return back from the  
town,  
They pass, I also pass, anything passes, none can be interdicted,  
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

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But Walt Whitman's democracy was more inclusive still. It is almost becoming the fad to forgive the evil in others and to insist that, after all, their good qualities give them the right to kinship with ourselves, but this is only one side of true democracy. The felon is my brother, not alone because he has every element of good that I so well recognize in myself, but because I have every element of evil that I see in him. Walt Whitman was wise enough to see the feelings and passions that make others sin, and he was just enough and great enough to recognize all these feelings in himself.

You felons on trial in courts,  
You convicts in prison-cells, you sentenced assassins  
chain'd and handcuff'd with iron,  
Who am I too that I am not on trial or in prison?  
Me, ruthless and devilish as any, that my wrists are not  
chain'd with iron, or my ankles with iron?

You prostitutes flaunting over the pavements or obscene  
in your rooms,  
Who am I that I should call you more obscene than myself?

O culpable! I acknowledge—I expose!  
(O admirers, praise not me—compliment not me—you  
make me wince,

I see what you do not—I know what you do not.)  
Inside these breast-bones I lie smutch'd and choked,  
Beneath this face that appears so impassive hell's tides  
continually run,

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Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me,  
I walk with delinquents with passionate love,  
I feel I am of them—I belong to those convicts and  
    prostitutes myself,  
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I  
    deny myself?

These lines are not a burst of poetic feeling, they are the sincere utterances of a brave philosopher and poet, who tells the truth about himself and about you and me. Let us be honest about sin. How do you and I differ from the murderer on the gallows, the prostitute in the street or the burglar in the jail? How wide a breach is there between coveting the house or home or seal skin coat of your neighbor and taking it if you can? How great a difference between making a sharp trade with your neighbor, getting more from him than you give to him, and taking outright what he has? Yet one is business, the other larceny. What is the distance between hating your neighbor, and wishing him dead: how great a chasm between feeling relief at his death, and killing him yourself? So far as the man is concerned, it is not the act that is evil, but the heart that is evil. There is no difference between the committed and the uncommitted crime. Every feeling that makes

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every sort of crime is in the heart of each and every one. Nature has made the blood of some of us a little cooler, and has developed caution a little more, or fate has made the temptation a trifle less, and thus we have escaped,—that is, managed to conceal the real passion that boils and surges in our hearts. Until this is dead, evil is in our souls. Away with all this talk of superiority and differences. It is cant—pure, simple cant.

I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself  
from my companions?

O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,  
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,  
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

Has man the right to be less kind than nature is? Have we the right by word or deed to pass judgment on our fellow man? Can we not learn of love and charity and hope from the sun, the rain, the generous earth, and the pulsing, growing spring? Hear Walt Whitman's word to a common prostitute:

Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whit-  
man, liberal and lusty as Nature,  
Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,  
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the  
leaves to rustle for you do my words refuse to  
glisten and rustle for you.

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Neither was it the magnanimous soul of Whitman that was charitable and kind, but it was the truthful, honest man who saw his own goodness in the woman; and her sin, which after all was only an excess of kindness, in himself.

The regenerated world will be built upon the democracy Walt Whitman taught. It will know neither rich nor poor; neither high nor low; neither good nor bad; neither right nor wrong; but

I will establish \* \* \* in every city of these states inland  
and seaboard,  
In the fields and woods, and above every keel, little or  
large, that dents the water,  
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,  
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

Walt Whitman was always and at all times an optimist. He never struck a despairing note or voiced a doubting strain. His hope was not anchored in blind faith or narrow creed. His optimism was not that of the cowardly fanatic who stubbornly shuts his eyes to avoid an unpleasant view. He looked abroad at all the world and called it good.

Optimism and pessimism in their last analysis are questions of temperament. They depend upon the eye that looks out, not upon the object that it sees. The pessimist



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points to the sunset, casting its lengthening shadows on the earth, and tells of the night that is coming on ; the optimist shows us the rosy dawn, the golden promise of a glorious day. The pessimist tells of winter, whose icy breath chills and deadens all the world ; the optimist points to springtime with its ever recurring miracle of light and life. Is the pessimist right or is the optimist right—does the night precede the day, or the day precede the night? After all, are our calendars wrong—does the winter with its white shroud and cold face mark the ending of the year, or does the springtime with its budding life and its resurrecting power awaken the dead earth to joyous, pulsing life again?

Above the view of the optimist, who sees the morning and the spring, and the pessimist, who sees the evening and the closing year, stand a few serene souls, who look on both with clear eye and tranquil mind, and declare that all is good. The morning is right and the evening is right. It is beautiful to pass through the joyous gates of birth ; it is good to be clasped in the peaceful arms of death. Rare Walt Whitman at thirty-seven, full of health and vigor and strength, with the world before him, and conscious of

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his genius and his power, sings in a burst of optimism :

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease, observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,  
Born of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Again at seventy, looking back on a life well spent, conscious that the last few sands are running out, a confirmed invalid with palsied limbs and failing strength, looking death squarely in the face and just before him ; with the same sweet smile, the same lovely nature, the same all-embracing philosophy, sings once again his optimistic song :

Not from successful love alone,  
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor victories of politics or war ;  
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions calm,  
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the evening sky,  
As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame, like fresher, balmier air,

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As the days take on a mellow light, and the apple at  
last hangs really finish'd and indolent-ripe on the  
tree,

Then for the teeming, quietest, happiest days of all !  
The brooding, blissful halcyon days !

It must be that somewhere is a serene height where life triumphs over death. It must be that nature does not jar, and that the close of a lovely life is really as peaceful and as beautiful as the decline of a perfect day ; that each day rightly lived and every year well spent, must bring the pilgrim more in harmony with his journey drawing to a close.

The world has ever shuddered at death—has stubbornly closed its eyes and refused to look at the great fact that nature places all about our path ; has never tried to look in its face, to take its hand, to think of its peaceful, forgiving, soothing touch ; has ever called it enemy and never thought to caress it as a friend. Walt Whitman was wiser than the rest. His philosophy made him know that death was equally good, whether the opening gateway to a freer, fuller life, or a restful couch for a weary soul.

Whitman had solved the eternal riddle ; he had conquered death ; he looked at her pale form and saluted her as he would wel-

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come a new birth. No bard ever sang a more glorious hymn than Walt Whitman sang to death.

Come, lovely and soothing Death,  
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later, delicate Death,  
Praised be the fathomless universe  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,  
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise  
For the sure enwinding arms of cool, enfolding Death.  
Dark Mother, always gliding near with soft feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?  
Then I chant for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come,  
    come unfalteringly,  
Approach, strong deliveress,  
When it is so, when thou hast taken them  
I joyously sing the dead,  
Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee,  
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.  
From me to thee glad serenades,  
Dances for thee I propose, saluting thee, adornments and  
    feastings for thee,  
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-  
    spread sky are fitting,  
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful  
    night,  
The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose  
    voice I know,  
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well veil'd  
    Death,  
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee,

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Over the tree tops I float thee a song,  
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields  
and the prairies wide,  
Over the dense-packed cities all, and the teeming  
wharves, and ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O Death.

Whitman in his wheel chair, physically shattered and broken, but with a mind strong and serene, and at peace with all the world, waiting for the sun to set, is a lesson in optimism better than all the sermons ever preached. Without faith in any form of religion that the world has ever known, he had brought his life so in harmony with nature that he felt every beat of the great, universal heart, and with the confidence of certain knowledge he looked upon the fading earth and caroled a song as he sailed forth on that great unknown sea, which is hidden in perpetual night, from all but the few great souls, whose wisdom and insight have given them the confidence and trust of a little child.

Joy, shipmates, joy!  
(Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,)  
Our life is closed, our life begins,  
The long, long anchorage we leave,  
The ship is clear at last, she leaps!  
She swiftly courses from the shore,  
Joy, shipmates, joy.



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Conscious of the integrity of his purpose,  
and the inherent righteousness of his life,  
moved and upheld by his broad philosophy  
and his patient, trustful soul, with no false  
modesty and with the same manly egoism  
that made him what he was—the kindest,  
gentlest, justest, broadest, manliest man—  
Walt Whitman asked the reward his life had  
earned.

Give me the pay I have served for,  
Give me to sing the song of the great Idea, take all the  
rest,  
I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised  
riches,  
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up for  
the stupid and crazy, devoted my income and  
labor to others,  
Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience  
and indulgence toward people, taken off my hat  
to nothing known or unknown,  
Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and with  
the young, and with the mothers of families,  
Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried them  
by trees, stars, rivers,  
Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or defiled my  
body,  
Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully  
claim'd for others on the same terms,  
Sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted  
from every State,  
(Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to  
breathe his last,

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This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd, rais'd,  
restor'd,  
To life recalling many a prostrate form;) 1  
I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of  
the taste of myself,  
Rejecting none, permitting all.

When man has grown simpler and saner and truer—when the fever of civilization has been subdued and the pestilence been cured; when man shall no longer deny and revile the universal mother who gave him birth, then Walt Whitman's day will come. In the clear light of that regenerated time, when the world looks back to the doubt and mist and confusion of to-day, Walt Whitman will stand alone, the greatest, truest, noblest prophet of the age, a man untainted by artificial life and unmoved by the false standards of his time. In a sodden, commercial, money-getting age, he enjoyed all the beauty of the earth without the vulgar lust to own. In a world of privilege and caste, he felt and taught the brotherhood of man and the kinship of all living things. In an age of false modesty and perverted thought, he sang the sanctity of the body with the divinity of the soul. Against the agnostic and the Christian too, he defended every part and portion of the faultless work of the creative power.

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Above the doleful, doubting voice of men, through the dreariest day and darkest night, in the raging of the storm and the madness of the waves, his strong, optimistic, reassuring note was ever heard above the rest, proclaiming to the universe that all is well. He saw that in a wise economy and a great broad way, that the false was true, the evil good, the wrong was right, and that over all the universe, pervading all its teeming life, a power omnipotent, beneficent and wise, was working to uplift, conserve and purify the whole. The poor, the weak, the suffering, the outcast, the felon, all knew him for their comrade and their friend. His great, inclusive, universal heart left no soul outside, but all alike he knew, the life of all he felt, and one and all he loved. In his vocabulary were no words of bitterness and hate, and in his philosophy no right to censure or to blame. In his every deed and thought he seemed to say:

“So I be written in the book of love,  
I have no care about that book above,  
Erase my name, or write it as you please,  
So I be written in the book of love.”

As the shadows lengthen and the daylight wanes—as the hair whitens and the passions

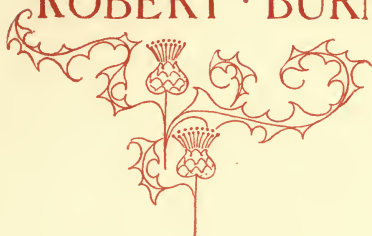
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cool, more and more do we learn that love is the true philosophy of life; more and more do we revise the sterner judgments of our earlier years; more and more do we see that pity should take the place of blame, forgiveness of punishment, charity of justice, and hatred be replaced by love. When old familiar faces awake the memories of bygone days, often and often again do we fear that our judgments were cruel and unjust, but every deed of mercy and every act of charity and every thought of pity is like the balm of Gilead to our souls. We may none of us be wise or great, fortune may elude us and fame may never come; but however poor or weak or humble, we yet may inscribe our names in the fairest, brightest book,—the book of love, and on its sacred pages, earned by the glorious truths he taught, by his infinite, ever present love of all, upon the foremost line will be inscribed Walt Whitman's name.

ROBERT · BURNS







## ROBERT BURNS.



It is difficult to account for a genius like Robert Burns. His life and work seem to defy the laws of heredity and environment alike. The beasts of the field were scarcely bound closer to the soil than were the ancestors from which he sprang; and from his early infancy he was forced to follow the stony path his father trod before. As a mere child, he learned how hard it is to sustain life in the face of an unfriendly nature and a cruel, bitter world. He was early bred to toil; not the work that gives strength and health, but the hard, constant, manual labor that degrades and embitters, deforms and twists and stunts the body and the soul alike. Burns was denied even the brief years of childhood—those few, short years upon which most of us look back from our disappointments and cares as the one bright spot in a gray and level plain.

It is not alone by the works he has left us that Robert Burns is to be truly judged. Fortune endowed him with a wondrous brain and a still rarer and greater gift—a tender, loving, universal heart; but as if she grudged him these and sought to destroy or stunt

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their power, she cast his lot in a social and religious environment as hard and forbidding as the cold and sterile soil of his native land; and from these surroundings alone he was obliged to draw the warmth and color and sunshine that should have come from loving hearts, generous bounties, and bright, blue southern skies. In measuring the power and character of Robert Burns, we must remember the hard and cruel conditions of his life, and judge of his great achievements in the light of these.

The ways of destiny have ever been beyond the ken of man; now and then, at rare, long intervals, she descends upon the earth, and in her arms she bears disguised a precious gift, which she lavished upon a blind, unwilling world. She passes by the gorgeous palaces and beautiful abodes of men, and drops the treasure in a manger or a hut; she comes again to take it back from a world that knew it not and cast it out; and again, she seeks it not among the strong and great, but in the hovel of the poor, the prison pen, or perhaps upon the scaffold or the block.

Measured by the standards of our day and generation, the life of Robert Burns was a failure and mistake. He went back to the great common Mother as naked of all the

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gilded trappings and baubles, which men call wealth, as when she first placed the struggling infant on its mother's breast.

Robert Burns was not a "business man"; he was not one of Dumfries' "first citizens"—in the measure of that day and this; he was one of its last if not its worst. He had no stock in a corporation and no interst in a syndicate or trust. He had neither a bank nor bank account. He never endowed a library, a museum, or a university. He was a singer of songs,—a dreamer of dreams. He was poor, improvident, intemperate, and according to the Scottish creed, immoral and irreligious. In spite of his great intellect he was doubted, neglected and despised. He died in destitution and despair; but the great light of his genius, which his neighbors could not see or comprehend, has grown brighter and clearer as the years have rolled away. A beautiful mausoleum now holds his once neglected ashes; monuments have been reared to his memory wherever worth is known and fame preserved; while millions of men and women, the greatest and the humblest of the world alike, have felt their own heart-strings moved and stirred in unison with the music of this immortal bard, whose song was the breath of Nature,—the sweetest, tender-

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est melody that ever came from that rarest instrument—the devoted poet's soul.

The great masterpieces of his genius were not created in the pleasant study of a home of refinement, luxury, and ease, but were born in the fields, the farm yard, the stable; while the "monarch peasant" was bending above the humblest tasks that men pursue for bread. Only the most ordinary education was within the reach of this child of toil, and the world's great storehouses of learning, literature, and art were sealed forever from his sight; and yet, with only the rude peasants, with whom his life was spent, the narrow setting of bleak fields and grey hills, which was the small stage on which he moved, and the sterile Scotch dialect with which to paint, he stirred the hearts of men with the sweetest, highest, purest melody that has ever moved the human soul.

Olive Schreiner tells of an artist whose pictures shone with the richest, brightest glow. His admirers gazed upon the canvas and wondered where he found the colors—so much rarer than any they had ever seen before. Other artists searched the earth, but could find no tints like his; he died with the secret in his breast. And when they undressed him to put his grave-clothes on,



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they found an old wound, hard and jagged above his heart; and still they wondered where he found the coloring for his work. Robert Burns, perhaps more than any other man who ever lived, taught the great truth that poets are not made but born; that the richest literature, the brightest gems of art, even the most pleasing earthly prospects are less than one spark of the divine fire, which alone can kindle the true light. Robert Burns like all great artists, taught the world that the beauty of the landscape, and the grandeur and pathos of life depend, not upon the external objects that nature has chanced to place before our view, but upon the soul of the artist, which alone can really see and interpret the manifold works of the great author, beside which all human effort is so poor and weak.

Millet looked at the French peasants standing in their wooden shoes, digging potatoes from the earth and pausing to bow reverently at the sounding of the Angelus, and saw in this simple life, so close to Nature's heart, more beauty and pathos and poetry than all the glittering courts of Europe could produce. And Robert Burns, whose broad mind and sympathetic soul made him kin to all living things, had no

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need to see the splendor and gaiety of wealth and power, to visit foreign shores and unknown lands; but the flowers, the heather, the daisies, the bleak fields, the pelting rains, the singing birds, the lowing cattle, and above all, the simple country folk seen through his eyes, and felt by his soul, and held in his all-embracing heart, were covered with a beauty and a glory that all the artificial world could not create, and that his genius has endowed with immortal life. Robert Burns did not borrow his philosophy from the books, his humanity from the church, or his poetry from the schools. Luckily for us he escaped all these, and unfettered and untaught, went straight to the soul of Nature to learn from the great source, the harmony and beauty and unity that pervades the whole; and he painted these with colors drawn from his great human heart. His universal sympathy gave him an insight into life that students of science and philosophy can never reach. Contemplating Nature, and seeing her generous bounties lavished alike on all her children, he could not but contrast this with the selfishness and inhumanity of man, which crushes out the weak and helpless and builds up the great and strong. Burns was a natu-

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ral leveler, and while men still believed in the "divine right of kings," he preached that "man was the divine King of rights." None knew better than he the injustice of the social life in which he lived, and in which we live to-day. Burns knew, as all men of intelligence understand, that worldly goods are not, and never have been given as a reward of either brains or merit.

It's hardly in a body's power  
To keep at times, frae being sour,  
To see how things are shared;  
How best o'chiels are whiles in want  
While coofs on countless thousands rant  
And ken na how to wair't.

The immortal singer of songs, and all his descendants, received infinitely less for all the works of his genius than an ordinary gambler often gets for one sale of something that he never owned, or one purchase of something that he never bought; and it is doubtful if all the masterpieces of the world in art, in literature, and in science, ever brought as much cash to those whose great, patient brains have carefully and honestly wrought that the earth might be richer and better and brighter, as has been often "made" by one inferior speculator upon a single issue of watered stock.

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Living in the midst of aristocracy and privilege and caste, Burns was a democrat that believed in the equality of man. It required no books or professors, or theories to teach him the injustice of the social conditions under which the world has ever lived. Here, as elsewhere, he looked to the heart—a teacher infinitely more honest and reliable than the brain.

If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave,  
By Nature's law design'd;  
Why was an independent wish  
E'er planted in my mind?

If not, why am I subject to  
His cruelty, or scorn?  
Or why has man the will and pow'r  
To make his fellow mourn?

Preachers and authors and teachers, judges and professors and lawyers, have been employed for ages to teach the justice of slavery and the folly and crime of equal rights; but through all quibbles and evasions, this question of Burns, straight from the heart, as well as the head, shows that all these excuses are but snares and cheats. The voice of the French Revolution could not fail to move a soul like that of Robert Burns. This great struggle for human liberty came upon the world with almost the

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suddenness of an earthquake, and with much of its terrors, too. Here the poor and the oppressed felt the first substantial hope for freedom that had pierced the long, dark centuries since history told the acts of men. To the oppressors and the powerful, who hated liberty then as they ever have, before and since, it was a wild, dread threat of destruction and ruin to their precious "rights." When the struggle commenced, Burns was enjoying the munificent salary of Fifty pounds a year as a whisky gauger in the village of Dumfries. He had already spent a winter in Edinburgh, and had been feted and dined by the aristocracy and culture of Scotland's capital without losing his head, although at no small risk. An acquaintance and entertainer of the nobility and an incumbent of a lucrative office, there was but one thing for Burns to do; this was to condemn the Revolution and lend his trenchant pen to the oppressor's cause; but this course he flatly refused to take. He openly espoused the side of the people, and wrote the "Tree of Liberty," one of his most stirring songs, in its defense.

Upon this tree there grows sic fruit,  
Its virtues a' can tell man;  
It raises man aboon the brute,



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It mak's him ken himsel' man.  
Gif ance the peasant taste a bit,  
He's greater than a lord man.

King Louis thought to cut it down  
When it was unco sma' man;  
For this the watchman cracked his crown,  
Cut aff his head an' a' man.

Even these words are not strong enough to express his love for natural liberty and his distrust of those forms and institutions which over and over again have crushed the priceless gem they pretend to protect.

A fig for those by law protected!  
Liberty's a glorious feast!  
Courts for cowards were erected,  
Churches built to please the priest.

Even higher and broader was Burns' view of equality and right. He stood on a serene height, where he looked upon all the strife and contention of individuals and states, and dreamed of a perfect harmony and universal order, where men and Nations alike should be at peace, and the world united in one grand common brotherhood, where the fondest wish of each should be the highest good of all. These beautiful, prophetic lines seem to speak of a day as distant now as when Burns wrote them down a hundred

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years ago. But still, all men that love the human race will ever hope, and work, and say with him :

Then let us pray that come it may,  
As come it will for a' that,  
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth  
May bear the gree, and a' that;  
For a' that, and a' that,  
It's coming yet, for a' that,  
That man to man, the warld o'er,  
Shall brothers be for a' that.

It is perhaps as a singer of songs that the literary fame of Burns will longest be preserved. No other poet has ever breathed such music from his soul. His melodies are as sweet and pure as the bubbling spring; and as natural and spontaneous as ever came from the throat of the nightingale or lark. These songs could not be made. The feeling and passion that left his soul bore this music as naturally as the zephyr that has fanned the strings of the Æolian harp. The meter of these songs was not learned by scanning latin verse, or studying the dry rules that govern literary art, but it was born of the regular pulse beats, which in the heart of Nature's poets are as smooth and unstudied as the rippling laughter of her purling brooks.

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John Anderson, my jo, John,  
When we were first acquaint,  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bonnie brow was brent;  
But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snow;  
But blessing on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill tegither,  
And mony a canty day, John,  
We've had wi' ane anither;  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
But hand in hand we'll go,  
And sleep tegither at the foot,  
John Anderson, my jo.

Although a plough boy and surrounded by the grime and dirt that come from contact with the soil, still even here Burns found material for music and poetry that will live as long as human hearts endure; for, though the sky may be warmer and bluer on the Mediterranean shore than where it domes the Scottish hills and crags, still the same heaven bends above them both, and the same infinite mysteries are hidden in their unfathomed depths. The tragedy of death is alike, whether defying the power of a Prince, or entering the home of the humblest peasant to bring the first moments of relief and rest.

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The miracle of life, whether wrought by Nature on the rich couch of the Queen or the unwatched pallet of the peasant, is the same mystery, ever new, ever old, appealing ever to the heart of man. The affections and passions,—those profound feelings that Nature planted deep in the being of all sentient things, and on whose strength all life depends,—these are the deepest and purest as we leave the conventions and trappings of the artificial world, and draw nearer to the heart of the great Universal power. With the sky above, the fields around, and all Nature throbbing and teeming with pulsing life, but one thing more was needed to make harmony and music, and that was Robert Burns.

The old story of human love was sung by him a thousand times and in a thousand varying moods, as never love was sung before. It mattered not that his melodies breathed of rustic scenes, of country maids, and of plain untutored hearts that beat as Nature made them feel, unfettered by the restraints and cords of an artificial life. Transport his Mary to a gorgeous palace, and deck her fair form with the richest treasures of the earth and bring to her side the proudest noble that ever paid homage to a princess,

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and no singer,—not even Burns himself,—  
could make a melody like the matchless music  
that he sung to Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,  
How rich the hawthorn's blossom;  
As underneath their fragrant shade,  
I clasp'd her to my bosom!

The golden hours, on angel wings,  
Flew o'er me and my dearie;  
For dear to me as light and life  
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

All the conventions and baubles and span-  
gles which fashion and custom use to adorn  
the fair could only have cheapened and  
made vulgar the rustic maiden that moved  
Burns' soul to song.

These sweet lines could never have been  
written of any but a simple country lass,  
whose natural charms had moved a suscepti-  
ble human heart:

I see her in the dewy flowers,  
I see her sweet and fair;  
I hear her in the tuneful birds,  
I hear her charm the air;

There's not a bonnie flower that springs  
By fountain, shaw, or green,  
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,  
But minds me o' my Jean.



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Who was this Burns that sang these sweet songs and whose musical soul was stirred by every breeze and moved to poetry by every lovely face and form that came within his view? Biographers and critics and admirers have praised the genius and begged excuses for the man. Without asking charity for this illustrious singer, let us view him in the light of justice, exactly as he was. It is not difficult to understand the character of Robert Burns. His heart was generous and warm and kind; his mind was open as the day, and his soul was sensitive to every breath that stirred the air. These qualities have made the poet loved in every land on earth, and brought more pilgrims to his grave than were ever drawn to the tomb of any other poet or author that has ever lived and died. And yet the short-sighted, carping, moralizing world, with solemn voice and wisdom ill-assumed, has ever told how much better and holier he could have been and should have been. Poor, silly, idle world, can you never learn that the qualities that make us strong must also make us weak; that the heart that melts at suffering and pain is made of clay so sensitive and fine as to be moved and swayed by all the emotions of the soul? Would you serve the weak, the

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suffering and the poor—would you calm their fears and dry their eyes and feel with them the cruel woes of life—you must wear your heart upon your sleeve, and then of course the daws will peck it into bits. Would you keep it safely hidden from the daws, you must hide it in a breast of stone or ice and keep it only for yourself. Perhaps we may admire the man that walks with steady step along a straight and narrow path, unmoved by all the world outside. He never feels and never errs. But we cannot ask of either man the virtues that belong to both, and when our choice is made we must take the strength and weakness too.

We look at the mountain top, lifting its snow-crowned head high into the everlasting blue, and are moved with wonder and with awe. Above is the endless sky; below, the world with all its bickering and strife, the clouds, the lightning and the storm, but the mountain, cold, impassive, changeless, unmoved by all the world, looks ever upward to the eternal heavens above. Again we gaze on the peaceful, fertile lowlands, rich with their generous harvests yet unborn—beautiful with their winding streams and grassy fields, ever ready to bestow bounteously on all that ask, demanding little and

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lavishly returning all ; and we love the quiet, rustic, generous beauty of the scene. The mountain is majestic and sublime, and the yielding, generous lowlands are beautiful and pleasing too. We love them both, but we cannot have them both at once and both in one.

Robert Burns, and all men like him that ever lived, were always giving from their generous souls. In the cold judgment of the world, Burns wasted many a gem upon the thoughtless, worthless crowd, who consumed a life he should have spent for nobler things. But the flower that never wastes its fragrance has no perfume to give out. If it is truly sweet, its strength is borne away on every idle wind that blows. Robert Burns with lavish bounty shed his life and fragrance on every soul he met. He loved them all and loved them well : his sensitive, harmonious soul vibrated to every touch, and moved in perfect harmony with every heart that came within his reach. The lives of men like him are one long harmony ; but as they pass along the stage of life, they leave a trail of disappointed hopes, and broken hearts, and vain regrets. But of all the tragedies great and small that mark their path, the greatest far and most pathetic is

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the sad and hopeless wreck that ever surely falls upon the exhausted artist's life.

The life of Burns was filled with wrecks—with promises made and broken, with hopes aroused, and then dashed to earth again. It was filled with these because one man cannot give himself personally to all the world. The vices of Robert Burns perhaps like those of all the rest that ever lived, were virtues carried to excess. Of course, the world could not understand it then, and cannot understand it now, and perhaps it never will, for slander and malice and envy, like death, always love a shining mark. The life of Burns and the life of each is the old Greek fable told again. Achilles' mother would make him invulnerable by dipping him in the river Styx. She held him by the heel, which remained unwashed and vulnerable, and finally brought him to his death. To whatever dizzy height we climb, and however invulnerable we seek to be, there still remains with all the untouched heel that binds us to the earth. And after all, this weak and human spot, is the truest bond of kinship that unites the world.

I look back at Robert Burns, at the poor human life that went out a hundred years ago, and study its works to know the man.



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I care not what his neighbors thought; I care not for the idle gossip of an idle hour. I know that his immortal songs were not born of his wondrous brain alone, but of the gentlest, trust, tenderest heart that ever felt another's pain. I know full well that the love songs of Robert Burns could have come from no one else than Robert Burns. I know that even the Infinite could not have changed the man and left the songs. Burns, like all true poets, told us what he felt and saw, and it is not for me to ask excuses for this or that; but rather reverently to bow my head in the presence of this great memory, and thank the infinite source of life for blessing us with Robert Burns exactly as he was.

It is difficult to understand our own being; it is impossible to know our fellow man's, but I have faith to think that all life is but a portion of one great inclusive power, and that all is good and none is bad. The true standard for judging Burns and all other men is given by Carlyle, and I cannot refrain from borrowing and adopting what he says:

“The world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as



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the substance: It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right than on what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the ratio of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay, the circle of a ginhorse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured; and it is assumed that the diameter of the ginhorse and that of the planet will yield the same ratio when compared with them! Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burns, Swift, Rousseau, which one never listens to with approval. Granted, the ship comes into harbor with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful; but to know how blameworthy; tell us first whether his voyage has been around the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs."

Robert Burns has been dust for a hundred years, and yet the world knows him better now than the neighbors that lived beside his

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door. I look back upon the little village of Dumfries,—not the first or the last town that entertained angels unawares. I see poor Robert Burns passing down the street, and the pharisees and self-righteous walking on the other side. The bill of indictment brought against him by the Dumfries community was long and black; he was intemperate, immoral, irreligious, and disloyal to the things that were. The first two would doubtless have been forgiven, but the others could not be condoned. And so this illustrious man walked an outcast through the town that to-day makes its proudest boast that it holds the ashes of the mighty dead, who in life was surrounded by such a halo of glory that his neighbors could not see his face.

A hundred years ago Scotland was held tightly in the grasp of the Presbyterian faith. Calvinism is not very attractive even now, especially to us that live and expect to die outside its fold, but even Calvinism has softened and changed in a hundred years. Burns was too religious to believe in the Presbyterian faith, and to the Scotch Covenanter there was no religion outside the Calvinistic creed. How any man can read the poetry of Robert Burns and not feel the

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deep religious spirit that animates its lines is more than I can see. True, he ridicules the dogmas and the creeds that held the humanity and intellect of Scotland in its paralyzing grasp; but creeds and dogmas are the work of man; they come and go; are born and die; serve their time and pass away; but the love of humanity, the instincts of charity and tenderness, the deep reverence felt in the presence of the infinite mystery and power that pervade the universe, these, the basis of all the religions of the earth, remain forever, while creeds and dogmas crumble to the dust.

Scotland of a hundred years ago measured Burns' religion by "Holy Willie's Prayer," "The Holy Fair," and kindred songs. The world a hundred years from now will not make these the only test. Dumfries and all the Unco' Guid of Scotland could not forgive Burns for writing:

O Thou wha in the heavens dost dwell,  
Wha, as it pleases best thyself,  
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,  
A' for thy glory,  
And no for ony guid or ill  
They've done afore thee!

I bless and praise thy matchless might,  
When thousands thou hast left in night,

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That I am here afore thy sight,  
For gifts an, grace,  
A burnin, an a shinin' light,  
To a' this place.

Lord, hear my earnest cry an' pray'r,  
Against that presbt'ry o' Ayr;  
Thy strong right hand, Lord make it bare  
Upo' their heads!  
Lord, weigh it down, an' dinna spare,  
For their misdeeds.

But, Lord, remember me and mine  
Wi' mercies temp'ral and divine,  
That I for gear and grace may shine,  
Excell'd by name;  
And a' the glory shall be thine,  
Amen, Amen.

It was not enough that Robert Burns taught a religion as pure and gentle and loving as that proclaimed by the Nazarene himself. Its meaning and beauty and charity were lost on those who would not see. Long ago it was written down that, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If this is any test of a religious life, then few men will stand as high in the great beyond as Robert Burns. This poor poet has melted more hearts to pity and moved more souls to mercy, and inclined more lives to charity than any other poet

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that ever dreamed and sung. Not men and women and children alone were the objects of his bounteous love and tender heart, but he felt the pain of the bird, the hare, the mouse, and even the daisy whose roots were upturned to the biting blast. Hear him sing of the poor bird for whom he shudders at the winter's cold :

Ilka hopping bird, we helpless thing  
That in the merry month o' spring  
Delighted me to hear thee sing,  
What comes o' thee!  
Where wilt thou cow'r thy chilling wing  
And close thy ee?

Few men that ever lived would stop and lament with Burns, as he shattered the poor clay home of the field mouse with his plough. No matter what he did ; no matter what he said ; no matter what his creed ; the man that wrote these lines deserves a place with the best and purest of this world or any other that the Universe may hold.

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie!  
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi' bickerin' brattle ;  
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,  
Wi' murd'ring prattle?

In a world which still enjoys the brutal



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chase, where even clergymen find pleasure in inflicting pain with the inhuman gun and rod, these lines written a hundred years ago, on seeing a wounded hare limp by, should place Burns amongst the blessed of the earth :

Inhuman man ! curse on thy barb'rous art,  
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye;  
May never pity sooth thee with a sight,  
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart !

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Oft, as by winding Nith I musing wait,  
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,  
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,  
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy  
hapless fate.

This was Robert Burns,—and yet Dumfries, which held this gentle soul within its walls, and the Protestant world of a hundred years ago, looked at John Calvin piling the faggots around Servetus' form, and knelt before him as a patron, religious saint, while they cast into outer darkness poor Robert Burns with his heart bowed down at the suffering of a wounded hare.

Will the world ever learn what true religion is? Will it ever learn that mercy and pity and charity are more in the sight of the

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Infinite than all the creeds and dogmas of the earth? Will it ever learn to believe this beautiful verse of Robert Burns :

But deep this truth impressed my mind,  
Through all his works abroad;  
The heart benevolent and kind,  
The most resembles God.

Will the world ever learn when it prays to pray with Robert Burns, as man has seldom spoken to the Infinite, in whose unknown hands, we are as bubbles on the sea; to the great power, which sends us forth into the darkness to stagger through a tangled maze for a little time and then calls us back to sleep within its all-embracing heart.

O thou, unknown, Almighty Cause  
Of all my hope and fear!  
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,  
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wandered in those paths  
Of life I ought to shun;—  
As something loudly in my breast  
Remonstrates I have done;—

Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me  
With passion wild and strong;  
And list'ning to their witching voice  
Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,  
Or frailty step aside,  
Do thou, All Good?—for such thou art  
In shades of darkness hide.

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Where with intention I have err'd,  
No other plea I have  
But, Thou art good! and goodness still  
Delighteth to forgive!

Dear Robert Burns, to place one flower upon your grave, or add one garland to your fame is a privilege indeed. A noble man you were, knighted not by King or Queen, but titled by the Infinite Maker of us all. You loved the world; you loved all life; you were gentle, kind and true. Your works, your words, your deeds, will live and shine to teach the brotherhood of man, the kinship of all breathing things, and make the world a brighter, gentler, kindlier place because you lived and loved and sung.





REALISM  
IN · LITERATURE  
AND · ART







## REALISM IN LITERATURE AND ART



MAN is nature's last and most perfect work, but, however high his development or great his achievements, he is yet a child of the earth and the rude forces that have formed all the life that exists thereon. He cannot separate himself from the environment that gave him birth, and a thousand ties of nature bind him back to the long forgotten past and prove his kinship to all the lower forms of life that have sprung from that great universal mother, Earth.

As there is a common law of being, which controls all living things, from the aimless motions of the mollusk in the sea to the most perfect conduct of the best developed man, so all the activities of human life, from the movements of the savage digging roots, to the work of the greatest artist with his brush, are controlled by universal law, and are good or bad, perfect or imperfect, as they conform to the highest condition nature has imposed.

The early savage dwelt in caves and cliffs and spent his life in seeking food and providing a rude shelter from the cold. He looked upon the earth, the sun, the sea, the

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sky, the mountain peak, the forest and the plain, and all he saw and heard formed an impression on his brain and aided in his growth. Like a child he marveled at the storm and flood; he stood in awe as he looked upon disease and death; and to explain the things he could not understand, he peopled earth and air and sea with gods and demons, and a thousand other weird creations of his brain. All these mysterious creatures were made in the image of the natural objects that came within his view. The gods were men grown large and endowed with marvelous powers, while tree and bird and beast alike were used as models for a being greater far than any nature ever formed.

An angry god it was that made the rivers overrun their banks and leave destruction in their path; an offended god it was that hurled his thunderbolts upon a wicked world, or sent disease and famine to the sinning children of the earth: and to coax these rulers to be merciful to man, the weak and trembling children of the ancient world turned their minds to sacrifice and prayer. And the first clouded thoughts of these rude men that were transcribed on monument and stone, or carved in wood, or painted with the colors borrowed from the sun and

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earth and sky; in short, the first rude art was born to sing the praise, and tell the fame, and paint the greatness of the gods. But all of this was natural to the time and place; the graven images, the chiseled hieroglyphics, and all this rude beginning of literature and art were formed upon what men saw and heard and felt, enlarged and magnified to fit the stature of the gods.

As the world grew older art was used to celebrate the greatness and achievements of kings and rulers as well as gods, and their tombs were ornamented with such decorations as these early ages could create; and yet all literature and art were only for the gods and the rulers of the world. Then, even more than now, wealth and power brought intellect to do its will, and all its force was spent to sing the praises of the rulers of the earth and air. The basis of all this art of pen and brush was the reality of the world, but this was so magnified and distorted for the base use of kings and priests that realism, in the true sense, could not exist. It would not do to paint a picture of a king resembling a man of flesh and blood, and of course a god must be far greater than a king. It would not do to write a tale in which kings and princes, lords

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and ladies, should act like men and women, else what difference between the ruler and the ruled? The marvelous powers that romance and myth had given to gods and angels were transferred to those of royal blood. The wonderful achievements of these kings and princes could be equaled only by the gods, and the poor dependents of the world, who lived for the glory of the great, were fed with legends and with tales that sung the praises of the strong.

Literature, sculpture, painting, music, and architecture, indeed all forms of art, were the exclusive property of the great, and the artist then, like most of those to-day, was retained to serve the strong and maintain the status of the weak. No one dreamed that there was any beauty in a common human life or any romance in a fact. The greatest of the earth had not yet learned to know that every life is a mystery and every death a tragedy; that the spark of the infinite, which alone transforms clay to life, animates alike the breast of the peasant and the soul of the prince. The world had not yet learned that the ant-hill is as great as Mont Blanc, and the blade of grass as mysterious as the oak. It is only now that the world is growing so delicate and refined that it can



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see the beauty of a fact; that it is developing a taste so rare as to distinguish between the false and true; that it can be moved by the gentle breeze as well as by the winter's gale; that it can see greater beauty in a statement true to life, than in the inflated tales, which children read.

Most of the art and literature the world has known has been untrue. The pictures of the past have been painted from the distorted minds of visionists, and the pliant brains of tools. They have represented impossible gods and unthinkable saints; angels and cherubs and demons; everything but men and women. Saints may be all right in their place, but a saint with a halo around his head was born of myth and not of art. Angels may be well enough, but all rational men prefer an angel with arms to an angel with wings. When these artists were not drawing saints and madonnas, they were spending their time in painting kings and royal knaves; and the pictures of the rulers were as unlike the men and women that they were said to represent as the servile spirit of the painter was unlike that of the true artist of to-day. Of course an artist would not paint the poor; they had no clothes that would adorn a work of art, and

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no money nor favors that could remunerate the toil. An ancient artist could no more afford to serve the poor than a modern lawyer could defend the weak.

After literature had so far advanced as to concern other beings than gods and kings, the authors of these ancient days told of wondrous characters endowed with marvelous powers; knights with giant strength and magic swords; princes with wondrous palaces and heaps of gold; travelers that met marvelous beasts and slew them in extraordinary ways; giants with forms like mountains, and strength like oxen, who could vanquish all but little dwarfs. Railroads were not invented in those early days, but travel was facilitated by the use of seven league boots. Balloons and telescopes were not yet known, but this did not keep favored heroes from peering at the stars or looking down from on high upon the earth; they had but to plant a magic bean before they went to bed at night, and in the morning it had grown so tall that it reached up to the sky; and the hero, although not skilled in climbing, needed simply to grasp the stalk and say, "Hitchety, hatchety, up I go. Hitchety, hatchety, up I go," and by this means soon vanish in the clouds. Tales of this

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sort used once to delight the world, and the readers half believed them true. We give them to children now, and the best of these view them with a half contempt.

The modern man does not enjoy these myths. He relishes a lie, but it must not be too big; it must be so small that, although he knows in his inmost soul that it is not true, he can yet half make himself believe it is not false. Most of us have cherished a pleasing, waking dream, and have fondly clung to the sweet delusion while we really knew it was not life. The modern literary stomach is becoming so healthy that it wants a story at least half true; should the falsehood be too strong, it acts as an emetic instead of food. These old fairy tales have lost their power to charm, as the stories of the gods and kings went down before. They have lost their charm, for as we read them now, they wake no answering chord born of the experiences that make up what we know of human life.

When the beauty of realism shall be truly known, we shall read the book, or look upon the work of art, and in the light of all we know of life, shall ask our beings whether the picture that the author or the painter creates for us is like the image that

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is born of the consciousness that moves our soul, and the experiences that have made us know.

Realism worships at the shrine of nature ; it does not say that there may not be a sphere in which beings higher than man can live, or that some time an eye may not rest upon a fairer sunset than was ever born behind the clouds and sea, but it knows that through countless ages nature has slowly fitted the brain and eye of man to the earth on which we live and the objects that we see : and the perfect earthly eye must harmonize with the perfect earthly scene.

To say that realism is coarse and vulgar is to declare against nature and her works, and to assert that the man she made may dream of things higher and grander than nature could unfold. The eye of the great sculptor reveals to him the lines that make the most perfect human form, and he chisels out the marble block until it resembles this image so completely that it almost seems to live. Nature, through ages of experiment and development, has made this almost faultless form. It is perfect because every part is best fitted for the separate work it has to do. The artist knows that he could not improve a single organ if he would, for all the rest of



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nature must be adjusted to the change. He has the skill to reproduce this shape in lasting stone, and the human brain could not conceive a form more beautiful and fair. Here is a perfect image of the highest work that countless centuries of nature's toil has made, and yet some would seek to beautify and sanctify this work by dressing it in the garb that shifting fashion and changing fancy makes for man.

Only the vulgar superstition of the past ever suggested that the reproduction of human forms in stone was an unholy work. Through long dark centuries religion taught that the flesh was vile and bad, and that the soul of man was imprisoned in a charnel house, unfit for human sight. The early Christians wounded, bruised, and maimed their house of clay; they covered it with skins, which under no circumstances could be removed, and many ancient saints lived and died without ever having looked upon the bodies nature gave. The images of saints and martyrs, which in the name of religion were scattered through Europe, were covered with paint and clothes, and were nearly as hideous as the monks that placed them there. When the condition of Europe and its religious thought are clearly



understood, it is not difficult to imagine the reception that greeted the first dawn of modern realistic art. Sculpture and painting deified the material. They told of beauty in the human form which hundreds of years of religious fanaticism had taught was bad and vile. If the flesh was beautiful, what of the monks and priests, who had hidden it from sight, who had kept it covered night and day through all their foolish lives, who maimed and bruised, cut and lacerated, for the glory of the spirit, which they thought was chained within. The church had taught that the death of the flesh was the birth of the soul, and they therefore believed that the artist's resurrection of the flesh was the death of the soul.

This old religious prejudice, born of a misty, superstitious past, has slowly faded from the minds of men, but we find its traces even yet. The origin of the feeling against realistic art has well nigh been forgot, but much of the feeling still remains. No one would now pretend to say that all the body was unholy or unfit for sight, and yet years of custom and inherited belief have made us think that a part is good and the rest is bad: that nature, in her work of building up the human form, has made one

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part sacred and another vile. It is easy to mistake custom for nature, and inherited prejudice for morality. There is scarcely a single portion of the human body but that some people have thought it holy, and scarcely a single portion but that some have believed it vile. It was not shame that made clothing, but clothing that made shame. If we would eradicate from our beliefs all that inheritance and environment have given, it would be hard for us to guess how much should still remain. Custom has made most things good and most things bad, according to the whim of time and place. To find solid ground we must turn to nature and ask her what it is that conduces to the highest happiness and the longest life.

The realistic artist cannot accept the popular belief, whatever that may be, as to just where the dead line on the human body should be drawn that separates the sacred and profane. There are realists that look at all the beauty and loveliness of the world, and all its maladjustments too, and do not seek to answer the old, old question whether back of this is any all-controlling and designing power; they do not answer, for they cannot know; but they strive to touch the subtle chord that makes their individual lives

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vibrate in harmony with the great heart of that nature, which they love; and they cannot think but that all parts of life are good, and that while men may differ, nature must know best.

Other realists there are that believe they see in nature the work of a divine maker, who created man in his own image as the last and highest triumph of his skill; that the minutest portion of the universe exists because he wished it thus. To the realist that accepts this all-controlling power, any imputation against a portion of his master's work must reach back to the author that designed it all.

We need not say that the human body might not be better than it is; we need only know that it is the best that man can have, and that its wondrous mechanism has been constructed with infinitely more than human skill; that every portion is adapted for its work, and through the harmony of every part the highest good is reached; and that all is beautiful, for it makes the being best adapted to the earth. Those who denounce realistic art deny that knowledge is power and that wisdom only can make harmony, and they insist instead that there are some things vital to life and happiness that we

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should not know, but that if we must know these things, we should at all events pretend that we do not. One day the world will learn that all things are good or bad according to the service they perform. One day it ought to learn that the power to create immortality, through infinite succeeding links of human life, is the finest and most terrible that nature ever gave to man, and that to ignore this power or call it bad, or fail to realize the great responsibility of this tremendous fact, is to cry out against the power that gave us life, and commit the greatest human sin, for it may be one that never dies.

The true artist does not find all beauty in the human face or form. He looks upon the sunset, painting all the clouds with rosy hue, and his highest wish is to create another scene like this. He never dreams that he could paint a sunset fairer than the one which lights the fading world. A fairer sunset would be something else. He sees beauty in the quiet lake, the grassy field, and running brook; he sees majesty in the cataract and mountain peak. He knows that he can paint no streams and mountain peaks more perfect than the ones that nature made.



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The growth of letters has been like the growth of art from the marvelous and mythical to the natural and true. The tales and legends of the ancient past were not of common men and common scenes. These could not impress the undeveloped intellect of long ago. A man of letters could not deify a serf, or tell the simple story of the poor. He must write to maintain the status of the world, and please the prince that gave him food; so he told of kings and queens, of knights and ladies, of strife and conquest; and the coloring he used was human blood.

The world has grown accustomed to those ancient tales, to scenes of blood and war, and novels that would thrill the soul and cause the hair to stand on end. It has read these tales so long that the true seems commonplace, and unfit to fill the pages of a book. But all the time we forget the fact that the story could not charm unless we half believed it true. The men and women in the tale we learn to love and hate; we take an interest in their lives; we hope they may succeed or fail; we must not be told at every page that the people of the book are men of straw, that no such beings ever lived upon the earth. We could take no interest in men and women that are myths conjured



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up to play their parts, and remind us in every word they speak that, regardless of the happiness or anguish the author makes them feel, they are but myths and can know neither joy nor pain.

It may be that the realistic tale is commonplace, but so is life, and the realistic tale is true. Among the countless millions of the earth it is only here and there, and now and then, that some soul is born from out the mighty deep that does not soon return to the great sea and leave no ripple on the waves.

In the play of life each actor seems important to himself; the world he knows revolves around him as the central figure of the scene; his friends rejoice in all the fortune he attains and weep with him in all his grief. To him the world is bounded by the faces that he knows, and the scenes in which he lives. He forgets the great surging world outside, and cannot think how small a space he fills in that infinity which bounds his life. He dies, and a few sorrowing friends mourn him for a day, and the world does not know he ever lived or ever died. In the ordinary life nearly all events are commonplace; but a few important days are thinly sprinkled in amongst all of those that intervene between

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the cradle and the grave. We eat and drink, we work and sleep, and here and there a great joy or sorrow creeps in upon our lives, and leaves a day that stands out against the monotony of all the rest, like the pyramids upon the level plains; but these events are very few and are important only to ourselves, and for the rest we walk with steady pace and slow along the short and narrow path of life, and rely upon the common things alone to occupy our minds and hide from view the marble stone that here and there gleams through the over-hanging trees just where the road leaves off.

The old novel which we used to read and to which the world so fondly clings, had no idea of relation or perspective. It had a hero and a heroine, and sometimes more than one. The revolutions of the planets were less important than their love. War, shipwreck, and conflagration, all conspired to produce the climax of the scene, and the whole world stood still until the lovers' hearts and hands were joined. Wide oceans, burning deserts, arctic seas, impassable jungles, irate fathers, and even designing mothers, were helpless against the decree that fate had made, and when all the barriers were passed and love had triumphed

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over impossibilities, the tale was done; through the rest of life nothing of interest could occur. Sometimes in the progress of the story, if the complications were too great, a thunderbolt or an earthquake was introduced to destroy the villain and help on the match. Earthquakes sometimes happen, and the realistic novelist might write a tale of a scene like this, but then the love affair would be an incident of the earthquake, and not the earthquake an incident of the love affair.

In real life the affections have played an important part and sometimes great things have been done and suffered in the name of love, but most of the affairs of the human heart have been as natural as the other events of life.

The true love story is generally a simple thing. "Beside a country road, on a sloping hill, lives a farmer, in the house his father owned before. He has a daughter, who skims the milk, and makes the beds, and goes to singing school at night. There are other members of the household, but our tale is no concern of theirs. In the meadow back of the house a woodchuck has dug its hole, and reared a family in its humble home. Across the valley only a mile away,

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another farmer lives. He has a son, who plows the fields and does the chores and goes to singing school at night. He cannot sing, but attends the school as regularly as if he could. Of course he does not let the girl go home alone, and in the spring, when singing school is out, he visits her on Sunday eve without excuse. If the girl had not lived so near, the boy would have fancied another girl about the same age, who also went to singing school. Back of the second farmer's house is another woodchuck hole and woodchuck home. After a year or two of courtship the boy and girl are married as their parents were before, and they choose a pretty spot beside the road, and build another house near by, and settle down to common life: and so the world moves on. And a woodchuck on one farm meets a woodchuck on the other, and they choose a quiet place beside a stump, in no one's way, where they think they have a right to be, and dig another hole and make another home." For after all, men and animals are much alike, and nature loves them both and loves them all, and sends them forth to drive the loneliness from off the earth, and then takes them back into her loving breast to sleep.

It may be that there are few great inci-



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dents in the realistic take, but each event appeals to life and cannot fail to wake our memories and make us live the past again. The great authors of the natural school—Tolstoi, Hardy, Howells, Daudet, Ibsen, Flaubert, Zola and their kind, have made us think and live. Their words have burnished up our minds and revealed a thousand pictures that hang upon the walls of memory, covered with the dust of years, and hidden from our sight. Sometimes of course we cry with pain at the picture that is thrown before our view, but life consists of emotions, and we cannot truly live unless the depths are stirred. These great masters, it is true, may sometimes shock the over-sensitive with the tales they tell of life, but if the tale is true, why hide it from our sight?

There is nothing more common than the protest against the wicked stories of the realistic school, filled with tales of passion and of sin; but he that denies passion denies all the life that exists upon the earth, and cries out against the mother that gave him birth. And he that ignores this truth passes with contempt the greatest fact that nature has impressed upon the world. Those who condemn as sensual the tales of Tolstoi and Daudet still defend the love stories of which



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our literature is full. Those weak and silly tales that make women fit only to be the playthings of the world, and deny to them a single thought or right except to serve their master, man. These objectors do not contend that tales dealing with the feelings and affections shall not be told, they approve these tales; they simply insist that they shall be false instead of true. The old novel filled the mind of the school girl with a thousand thoughts that had no place in life—with ten thousand pictures she could never see. It taught that some time she should meet a prince in disguise to whom she would freely give her hand and heart. So she went out upon the road to find this prince, and the more disguised he was, the more certain did she feel that he was the prince for whom she sought. The realist paints the passions and affections as they are. Both man and woman can see their beauty and their terror, their true position, and the relation that they bear to all the rest of life. He would not beguile the girl into the belief that her identity should be destroyed and merged for the sake of this feeling, which not once in ten thousand times could realize the promises the novel made; but he would leave her as an individual to make the

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most she can, and all she can, of life, with all the hope and chance of conquest, which men have taken for themselves. Neither would the realist cry out blindly against these deep passions, which have moved men and women in the past, and which must continue fierce and strong as long as life exists. He is taught by the scientist that the fiercest heat may be transformed to light, and is taught by life that from the strongest passions are sometimes born the sweetest and the purest souls.

In these days of creeds and theories, of preachers in the pulpit and of preachers out, we are told that all novels should have a moral and be written to serve some end. So we have novels on religion, war, marriage, divorce, socialism, theosophy, woman's rights, and other topics without end. It is not enough that the preachers and lecturers shall tell us how to think and act; the novelist must try his hand at preaching too. He starts out with a theory, and every scene and incident must be bent to make it plain that the author believes certain things. The doings of the men and women in the book are secondary to the views the author holds. The theories may be true, but the poor characters that must adjust their lives to these

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ideal states are sadly warped and twisted out of shape. The realist would teach a lesson, too, but he would not violate a single fact for all the theories in the world—for a theory could not be true if it did violence to life. He paints his picture so true and perfect that all men who look upon it know it is a likeness of the world that they have seen; they know that these are men and women and little children that they meet upon the streets; they see the conditions of their lives, and the moral of the picture sinks deep into their minds.

There are so-called scientists that make a theory and then gather facts to prove their theory true; the real scientist patiently and impartially gathers facts, and then forms a theory to explain and harmonize these facts. All life bears a moral, and the true artist must teach a lesson with his every fact. Some contend that the moral teacher must not tell the truth; the realist holds that there can be no moral teaching like the truth. The world has grown tired of preachers and sermons; to-day it asks for facts. It has grown tired of fairies and angels, and asks for flesh and blood. It looks on life as it exists, both its beauty and its horror, its joy and its sorrow; it wishes to see it all; not the prince

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and the millionaire alone, but the laborer and the beggar, the master and the slave. We see the beautiful and the ugly, and with it know what the world is and what it ought to be; and the true picture, which the author saw and painted, stirs the heart to holier feelings and to grander thoughts.

It is from the realities of life that the highest idealities are born. The philosopher may reason with unerring logic, and show us where the world is wrong. The economist may tell us of the progress and poverty that go hand in hand; but these are theories, and the abstract cannot suffer pain. Dickens went out into the streets of the great city and found poor little Jo sweeping the crossing with his broom. All around was the luxury and the elegance, which the rich have ever appropriated to themselves; great mansions, fine carriages, beautiful dresses, but in all the great city of houses and homes, poor little Jo could find no place to lay his head. His home was in the street, and every time he halted for a moment in the throng, the policeman touched him with his club and bade him "move on." At last, ragged, wretched, almost dead with "moving on," he sank down upon the cold stone steps of a magnificent building erected for "The Prop-



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agation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts." As we think of wretched, ragged Jo in the midst of all this luxury and wealth, we see the tens of thousands of other waifs in the great cities of the world, and we condemn the so-called civilization of the earth that builds the mansions of the rich and great upon the rags and miseries of the poor.

The true realist cannot worship at the shrine of power, nor prostitute his gifts for gold. With an artist's eye he sees the world exactly as it is, and tells the story faithful unto life. He feels for every heart that beats, else he could not paint them as he does. It takes the soul to warm a statue into life and make living flesh and coursing blood, and each true picture that he paints or draws makes the world a better place in which to live.

The artists of the realistic school have a sense so fine that they cannot help but catch the inspiration that is filling all the world's best minds with the hope of greater justice and more equal social life. With the vision of the seer they feel the coming dawn when true equality shall reign upon the earth; the time when democracy shall no more be confined to constitutions and to laws, but will be a part of human life. The greatest artists



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of the world to-day are telling facts and painting scenes that cause humanity to stop, and think, and ask why one should be a master and another be a serf; why a portion of the world should toil and spin, should wear away its strength and life, that the rest should live in idleness and ease.

The old-time artists thought they served humanity by painting saints and madonnas and angels from the myths they conjured in their brains. They painted war with long lines of soldiers dressed in uniforms, and looking plump and gay; and a battle scene was always drawn from the side of the victorious camp, with the ensign proudly planting his bright colors on the rampart of the foe. One or two were dying, but always in their comrades' arms, and listening to shouts of victory that filled the air, and thinking of the righteous cause for which they fought and died. In the last moments they dreamed of pleasant burial yards at home, and of graves kept green by loving, grateful friends; and a smile of joy shone on their wasted faces that was so sweet, that it seemed a hardship not to die in war. They painted peace as a white winged dove settling down upon a cold and fading earth. Between the two it was plain which choice a boy would make, and thus art served the state and king.

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But Verestchagin painted war; he painted war so true to life that as we look upon the scene, we long for peace. He painted war as war has ever been, and as war will ever be—a horrible and ghastly scene, where men, drunk with blind frenzy which rulers say is patriotic pride, and made mad by drums and fifes and smoke and shot and shell and flowing blood, seek to maim and wound and kill, because a ruler gives the word. He paints a battle field, a field of life and death; a field of carnage and of blood; and who are these that fight like fiends and devils driven to despair? What cause is this that makes these men forget that they are men, and vie with beasts to show their cruel thirst for blood? They shout of home and native land, but they have no homes, and the owners of their native land exist upon their toil and blood. The nobles and princes, for whom this fight is waged, are far away upon a hill, beyond the reach of shot and shell, and from this spot they watch their slaves pour out their blood to satisfy their rulers' pride and lust of power. What is the enemy they fight? Men like themselves; who blindly go to death at another king's command, slaves, who have no land, who freely give their toil or blood, which-

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ever one their rulers may demand. These fighting soldiers have no cause for strife, but their rulers live by kindling in their hearts a love of native land, a love that makes them hate their brother laborers of other lands, and dumbly march to death to satisfy a king's caprice. But let us look once more after the battle has been fought. Here we see the wreck and ruin of the strife; the field is silent now, given to the dead, the beast of prey and night. A young soldier lies upon the ground; the snow is falling fast around his form; the lonely mountain peaks rise up on every side; the wreck of war is all about. His uniform is soiled and stained, a spot of red is seen upon his breast. It is not the color that his country wove upon his coat to catch his eye and bait him to his death; it is hard and jagged and cold. It is his life's blood, which leaked out through a hole that followed the point of a sabre to his heart. His form is stiff and cold, for he is dead. The cruel wound and icy air have done their work. The government that took his life taught this poor boy to love his native land; as a child he dreamed of scenes of glory and of power, and the great wide world just waiting to fall captive to his magic strength. He dreamed of war

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and strife, of victory and fame; if he should die, kind hands would smooth his brow, and loving friends would keep his grave and memory green, because he died in war. But no human eye is there at last, as the mist of night and mist of death shut out the lonely mountains from his sight. The snow is all around, and the air above is grey with falling flakes, which soon will hide him from the world; and when the summer time shall come again, no one can tell his bleaching bones from all the rest. The only life upon the scene is the buzzard slowly circling in the air above his head, waiting to make sure that death has come. The bird looks down upon the boy, into the eyes through which he first looked out upon the great, wide world, and which his mother fondly kissed; upon these eyes the buzzard will commence his meal.

Not all the world is beautiful, and not all of life is good. The true artist has no right to choose the lovely spots alone and make us think that this is life. He must bring the world before our eyes and make us read and learn. As he loves the true and noble, he must show the false and bad. As he yearns for true equality, he must paint the master and the slave. He must tell the truth, and

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tell it all, must tell it o'er and o'er again, till the deafest ear will listen and the dumbest mind will think. He must not swerve to please the world by painting only pleasant sights and telling only lovely tales. He must think, and paint, and write, and work, until the world shall learn so much and grow so good, that the true will all be beautiful and all the real be ideal.








THE · SKELETON  
IN · THE · CLOSET





## THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET

HE closet has so long been allotted to the skeleton that we have come to regard this room as its fit and natural home; it has been given over to this guest because it is the darkest, the closest and least conspicuous in the house. The door can be securely fastened and only now and then can the grating bones be heard by the world outside. Still, however secluded and unused this guest chamber seems to be, and however carefully we bolt the door and darken every chink and crevice in the walls, we are ever conscious that the occupant is there, and will remain until the house is closed, and the last tenant has departed, never to return. The very fact that we try so hard to keep the skeleton in its proper room, makes it the more impossible to forget that it is there. Now and then we awake with a start at the thought of what might happen should it break the door and wander through the house, and then stray out into the wide world, and tell all the peaceful, trusting neighbors from what house it stole away; and yet we are somehow conscious that the rumor of its dread presence has already

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traveled as far as we are known. Man is a wonderfully adaptable animal; he fits himself easily into the environment where he is placed. He passes from infancy to childhood and from childhood to boyhood as smoothly as the placid river flows to the waiting sea. Every circumstance and surrounding of his life seems to have been made for him. Suddenly a new desire takes possession of his soul; he turns his back on the home of his childhood days and goes out alone. In a little time a new family is reared about him, and he forgets the group that clustered round his father's hearth. He may lose a leg or a fortune, and he soon conforms to his changed condition and life goes on as naturally and as easily as before. A child is born beneath his roof; it takes a place within his heart and home, and in a little while he can scarcely think of the day it was not there. Death comes, and a member of his little band is carried out, but time drops its healing balm upon the wounds and life goes on almost unconscious that the dead has ever lived. But while we adjust ourselves naturally to all things living and to ever varying scenes, the skeleton in the closet is always an intruder, no matter how long it may have dwelt beneath the roof.



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Even though we may forget its actual presence for a little time, still no scene is so perfect and no enjoyment so great but we feel a cloud casting its shadow across our happiness or the weight of some burden on our soul; and when we stop to ask the cause, the grinning skeleton reminds us that it is with us even here.

This specter stands quite apart from the other sorrows of our life; age seems powerless to forget, and time will not bring its ever-fresh, recurring scenes to erase the memory of the past. This is not because the skeleton is really such a dreadful guest. The kind and loving ivy creeps tenderly around each yawning scar and crumbling stone, until the whole ruin is covered with a lovely green. The decaying pile stands free and open to the sun and rain and air. It does not hide its head or apologize for the blemishes and seams that mark its face, and a kind, forgiving nature takes the ruin, scars and all, and blends these with her softening years and lovely face into a beautiful harmonious whole; but unlike the ruin, the skeleton in the closet is a neglected, outcast child. With every breath we insist that there is nothing in the room. We refuse to take it to our hearts and homes and

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acknowledge it as our own. We seek to strangle it to death, and each fresh attempt not only shows our murderous design, but proves that the skeleton is not a pulseless thing but is endowed with immortal life. The brighter the fire-light that glows around our hearth, the more desolate and drear sounds the wail of the wind outside, for through its cold blasts wanders the outcast, whose rightful place is in the brightest corner of the room.

Our constant annoyance and sorrow at this dread presence is not caused by the way the skeleton behaves to us, but from the way we treat our guest. If we looked it squarely in its grinning skull, it might not seem so very loathsome to the sight. It has the right to grin. It may be but a grim smile over the consciousness that it has sounded the last sorrow and that henceforth no greater evils are in store; it may be a mocking, sardonic grin at the thought of our discomfiture over its unwelcome presence and the knowledge that we cannot drive it out.

There is no truer index to real character than the way we treat the skeletons with which we live. Some run to the closet door, and try to lock it fast when a neighbor comes their way. If perchance any fear of dis-

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covery is felt, they stand guard outside and solemnly protest that there is nothing in the room. Their anxiety and haste plainly show fear lest their hated guest shall reveal its face; and of course there rises in the neighbor's mind a vision of a skeleton more horrible by far than the one inside the door or than anyone can be. If the luckless jailer really fears that the rattle of the prisoner's bones has been heard outside, he feels it his duty to carefully explain or tediously cover up every detail and circumstance that caused the presence of the specter in the house. All this can only show that the guest is terrible to behold or that the jailer is so poor and weak that he himself is a helpless prisoner to his foolish pride and unmanly fear. It can only serve to emphasize the presence he tries so vainly to deny. There are also those who know that their skeleton has been seen, or who having lost all else but this persistent, grinning guest, drag it out and parade it in the world to gain the sympathy or the money of their neighbors and their friends, like the crippled beggar standing on the corner holding out his hat to every passer-by. The true man neither guiltily conceals nor anxiously explains nor vulgarly parades. He lives his life the best he can,

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and lets it stand for what it is. A thousand idle tales may be true or false. One may have seen but certain things, and placed him with the saints. Another little soul, who never felt the breadth and depth of human life, may have seen his scars alone, and cast him out. But standing by his side, or clasping his strong, sympathetic hand, no one thinks of halos or scars or asks an explanation of this or that, for in his whole being is felt the divine presence of a great soul, who has lived and loved, sinned and suffered, and been strengthened and purified by all.

The skeleton is really kind that it only grins as we look it in the face. Of all our household it has received the hardest treatment at our hands. It has helped us more than any of the rest, and been locked in the closet for its pains. It may perchance have come at our own invitation, bringing us the keenest, wildest joy our life had ever known. We gladly drained the pleasure to the dregs, and then coolly locked the memory close in the darkest hole that we could find. The day it came, has well nigh faded from our minds, and the mad, wild joy we knew can never more be wakened from the burned-out passions of the past, but the skeleton, which



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rose up grim and ghastly from the dying flame, remains to mock and jeer and make us sad. And now when the day is spent and the cup is drained, we charge the poor specter with our lasting pain, and forget the joy it brought. We look with dread at these mocking, grinning bones, which we cannot drive away, and we forget the time, long, long ago, when those dry sticks were covered up with beautiful and tempting flesh.

It may be that we shall always shudder as we hear the rattle of the bones when we pass the closet door, but in justice to the inmate, we should give him credit for the joys of long ago. And this brings us back to the old question of the balancing of pain and pleasure, good and evil, right and wrong. It may be that in the mysterious adjustment of nature's balances, a moment of supreme bliss will outweigh an eternity of pain. In the infinite economy, which life counted for the more,—that of Napoleon, or the poor French peasant that passed through an obscure existence to an unknown grave? The brief glory of Austerlitz was followed by the bitterness of Waterloo, and the long silence of an exile's life, while the peasant trod his short path without ambition, and filled a nameless grave without regret. Which is



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the greater and finer, the blameless life of the patient brute, or the winding, devious path of a human soul? It is only the dull level that brings no sorrow or regret. It is a sterile soil where no weeds will grow, and a bare closet where no skeleton will dwell.

Neither should we remember the skeleton only for the joy it brought; from the day it came, it has been the greatest benefactor that our life has known. When the mad delirium had passed away, and the last lingering fragrance was almost spent, this despised skeleton remained as the sole companion, whose presence should forever bind us back to those feelings that were fresh and true and straight from nature's heart, and that world which once was green and young and filled with pulsing life. As the shadows gather round our head, and our once-straying feet fall mechanically into the narrow path so straight and even at the farther end, we may shudder now and then at the thought of the grim skeleton whose life is so far removed from our sober later selves; but with the shudder comes a spark, a flash of that great, natural light and heat that once possessed this tottering frame, and gave a glow of feeling and a strength of purpose so deep and all-controlling that the artificial life of an artificial world seems no more than a dim candle shining by the glorious sun.

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It is the exhausted emotions of age, which men call prudence, that are ever warning youth of the follies of its sins. It is the grinning skeleton, speaking truly from the memory of other days, that insists that life's morning held the halcyon hours. Does old age outlive the follies of childhood or does the man outgrow the wisdom of youth? The most vociferous preachers are often those whose natural spirits have led them to drink the deepest of life. They are so foolish as to think that others can be taught by their experiences, and mumbling grey-beards endorse the excellence and wisdom of the sermons that they preach. They are not wise enough to know that their prattle is more vain and foolish than the babblings of their childhood days. It was the growing, vital sap of life that made them children years ago; it is the icy, palsying touch of age that makes them babbling, preaching children once again. As well might the calm and placid lake teach the beauty of repose to the boiling, seething cataract, that thunders down Niagara's gulf. When the troubled waters shall have reached the lake they shall be placid too. Nature is wiser far than man. She makes the first childhood precede the second. If the age of prudence came with

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youth, it would be a dull and prosy world for a little time ; then life would be extinct upon the earth and death triumphant over all.

But these are the smallest reasons why we should venerate the neglected skeleton, which we have ruthlessly cast into the closet as if it were a hideous thing. This uncanny skeleton, ever thrusting its unwelcome bones into our presence and our lives, has been the most patient, persistent, constant teacher that all our years have known. We look backward through the long dim vista of the past, back to the little trusting child that once nestled on its mother's breast and from whose loving lips and gentle soul it first was told of life, its temptations and its sins ; backward to her, whose whole thought was a benediction to the life that was once a portion of herself. We remember still this mother's words teaching us the way to live and telling us the way to die. We always knew that no selfish thought inspired a single word she said and yet time and time again we strayed and wandered from the path she pointed out. We could not keep the road and after while we did not try. Again our teacher told us of the path. He, too, was good and kind and knew the way

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we ought to go, and showed us all the bad results of sin, and still we stumbled on. The preacher came and told us of the beauteous heaven, straight at the other end of the narrow path, and the yawning gulf of hell to which our shifting footsteps led; but we heeded not his solemn tones, though they seemed to come with the authority of God himself. As the years went on, our mother's voice was stilled, the teacher's words were hushed, the preacher's threats became an empty, hollow sound; and in their place came the grinning skeleton, born of our own desires and deeds; less loving than the gentle mother, more real and life-like than the teacher, saner and truer than the preacher's idle words. It was ever present and persistent; it was a portion of our very selves.

We detested and feared the hated thing; we locked it in the closet, and denied that it was there; but through the brightness of the day and the long and silent watches of the night, we heard its rattling bones, and felt its presence at our side. No teacher of our youth was like that grim and ghastly skeleton, which we tried to hide away. The schoolmaster of our early life took our fresh, young, plastic minds and sought to crowd them full of useless, unrelated facts that



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served no purpose through the years that were to come. These lessons that our teacher made us learn by rote filled so small a portion of our daily lives that most of them were forgotten when the school-house door was closed. When now and then we found some use for a trifling thing that we had learned through years at school, we were surprised to know that the pedagogue had taught us even this. In those early days it seemed to us that life would consist of one long examination in which we should be asked the names of states, the rule of three, and the words the Romans used for this and that. All that we were taught of the great world outside and the problem that would one day try our souls, was learned from the copy books where we wrote the same old maxim until all the paper was used up. In after years, we learned that, while the copy book might have taught us how to write in a stilted, unused hand, still all its maxims were untrue.

We left the school as ignorant of life as we commenced, nay, we might more easily have learned its lesson without the false, misleading theories we were taught were true. When the doors were opened and the wide world met us face to face, we tested what we



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learned, and found it false, and then we blundered on alone. We were taught by life that the fire and vigor of our younger years could not be governed by the platitudes of age. Nature was ever present with her strong and earthly grasp, her keen desires, her white hot flame. We learned the precepts of the books, but we lived the life that nature taught.

Our pathetic blunders and mistakes, and the skeleton that followed in their wake, remained to teach us what was false and point to what was true. This grim, persistent teacher made but little of the unimportant facts that the schoolmaster sought to make us learn, and it laughed to scorn the preacher's doctrine, that in some way we could avoid the results of our mistakes and sins. It did not preach, it took its place beside us as another self and by its presence sought to make us know that we could not be at peace until we clasped it to our breast and freely accepted the unwelcome thing as a portion of our lives.

Only the smallest fraction that we learned in youth was assimilated and made a portion of ourselves; the rest faded so completely that it seemed never to have been. The teacher soon became a dim, uncertain mem-

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ory of the past, whose voice had long since died away; but the skeleton in the closet never wearied nor grew old. It ever made us learn again the lesson we would fain forget; opened at each succeeding period of our lives the pages we would gladly put away, until, at last, the ripening touch of time and the specter's constant presence made us know. From the day it came beneath our roof, it remained the liveliest, wisest, most persistent member of the family group, the tireless, watchful teacher, who would neither sleep nor allow its pupil to forget.

It may be that there are lives so barren and uneventful that this guest passes ever by their door, but unfortunate indeed is that abode where it will not dwell. The wide vistas can be seen only from the mountain top, and the infinite depths of life can be sounded only by the soul that has been softened and hallowed by the sanctifying touch of misery and sin.

Life is a never-ending school, and the really important lessons all tend to teach man his proper relation to the environment where he must live. With wild ambitions and desires untamed, we are spawned out into a shoreless sea of moving molecules of life, each separate atom journeying on an un-

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known course, regardless of the countless other lives it meets as it blindly rushes on; no lights nor headlands stand to point the proper way the voyager should take, he is left to sail an untried bark across an angry sea. If no disaster should befall, it does not show that the traveler is wise or good, but that his ambitions and desires are few or he has kept close inside the harbor line. At first we seek to swim the flood, to scale the rocky heights, to clutch the twinkling stars. Of course we fail and fall, and the scars our passions and ambitions leave, remain, though all our particles are made anew year after year. We learn at last to leave the stars to shine where they belong, to take all things as they are and adjust our lives to what must be.

The philosophy of life can come only from those experiences that leave lasting scars and results that will not die. Rather than seek to cover up these gaping wounds, we should accept with grace the tales they tell, and show them as trophies of the strife we have passed through. Those scars are honorable that have brought our lives into greater harmony with the universal power. For resist it as we will, this infinite, loving presence will ever claim us as a portion of its self until

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our smallest fragments return once more to earth, and are united with the elements from which we came.

No life can be rounded and complete without the education that the skeleton alone can give. Until it came we never knew the capacities of the human soul. We had learned by rote to be forgiving, kind and true. But the anguish of the human soul cannot be told—it must be felt or never known. That charity born of true comradeship, which is the highest and holiest sentiment of life, can be taught by the skeleton alone. The self-righteous, who prate of forgiveness to their fellow men and who look down upon their sinning brothers from above, are hypocrites or fools. They either have not lived or else desire to pass for something they are not. No one can understand the devious, miry paths trodden by another soul unless he himself has wandered through the night.

Those placid, human lives that have moved along a narrow, even path; that learned by rote the lessons that the churches and the schools have ever taught; whose perfection consists in refraining from doing certain things in certain ways; who never had a noble thought or felt a great desire to help their fellow men—those blameless, aim-



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less, worthless souls, are neither good nor bad. They neither feel nor think; no skeleton would deem it worth its while to come inside their door.

The world judges the conduct of youth by the standards of age. Even when due allowance is made for the inexperience and haste of the young, it is assumed that youth and age are measured by the calendar alone. Few have ever been wise enough to know that every passion and circumstance must be fully weighed, before an honest verdict can be written down; and that therefore only the infinite can judge a human soul.

Though accursed, doubted, and despised, Nature ever persists in her relentless plan. She would make us learn the lessons that youth so easily forgets. She finds us headstrong, unreasoning, and moved by the same feelings that sway the brute. She decrees that every act, however blind or wilful, must leave its consequences on our lives, and these immortal consequences we treat as skeletons and lock them up. But these uncanny specters wrap us closely in their bony arms; they ever peer with sightless eyes into our soul; they are with us if we sleep or wake, and their persistent presence will not let us sleep. It is the hated, im-



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prisoned skeleton that we vainly sought to hide away, that takes an untamed, fiery soul within its cruel, loving clasp, and holds it closely in its unforgiving grasp until the vain longings and wild desires of youth are subdued, and cooled, and the deeper harmonies of life are learned. It is the hated skeleton that finds within our breast a heart of flint and takes this hard and pulseless thing and scars and twists and melts it in a thousand tortuous ways until the stony mass is purged and softened and is sensitive to every touch.

It is this same despised skeleton that finds us vain and boastful and critical of other's sins, that watches every word we speak and even each unuttered thought; it is with us when we tightly draw our robes and pass our fellow on the other side; it hears us when we seek to show how good we are by boasting of our neighbor's sins; for every spot of black or red that we see upon another's robes, it points its bony fingers to a scar upon our heart, to remind us that we are like the rest; and the same finger ever points us to our wounds until we feel and understand that the clay the Master used for us was as weak and poor as that from which he made the rest.

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However blind and stubborn we may be, however long we deny the lesson that the skeleton would teach, still it will not let us go until with perfect peace and harmony we look at all the present and the past, at all that was, and all that is, and feel no regrets for what is gone, and no fears for what must come. It may be that our stubborn, stiff-necked soul will still persist until the hair is white and the heavy shadows hang about our heads, but the skeleton with his soothing, softening ally, time, sits with the last watchers at our suffering bed, and goes if need be, to the silent grave, where alike the darkest crimson spot and the softest, purest clay are reunited once again with the loving, universal mother who has forgiven all and conquered all. It matters not how high we seem to climb, or what the careless world may think for good or ill. It matters not how many small ambitions we may seem to have achieved. Even the unworthy cannot be forever soothed by the hollow voice of fame. All triumphs are futile without the victory over self; and when the triumph over self is won, there are no more battles to be fought, for all the world is then at peace. It is the skeleton in the closet pointing ever to the mistakes and maladjustments

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of our past, the skeleton standing there before our gaze that makes us still remember where our lives fell short; that teaches us so slowly but so surely to turn from the unworthy victories and the dire defeats of life to the mastery of ourselves. It is the skeleton from whom we learn that we can live without the world, but not without ourselves.

Without the skeleton we could never feel another's sorrow, or know another's pain. Philosophy and theology cannot tell us how another's life became a hopeless wreck. It is ourselves alone that reveals the precipice along which every footpath leads. It is from life we learn that it is but an accident when we fall, and equally an accident when we keep the path. The pupil of the schools may look down with pitying glance upon the unfortunate victim of what seems to be his sin. He may point to a love that will forgive and kindly plead with him to take another path, but the wayfarer that the skeleton has taught will clasp this fellow mortal to his heart, for in his face he sees but the reflection of himself. The wise and good may forgive the evil and the wrong, but only the sinner knows that there is no sin.

The charity that is born of life and sin is

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not fine because of its effect on some one else, but for what it does for us. True charity is only the sense of the kinship of all living things. This is the charity that neither humiliates nor offends. It is the sense that brings a new meaning to life and a new purpose to the soul.

Let us do simple justice to this neglected, outcast guest, the useful, faithful teacher of our lives. Let us open the closet door, and let the skeleton come out, and lock the schoolmaster in its place. Let us leave this faithful friend to roam freely at its will. Let us look it squarley in the face with neither fear or shame, but with gratitude for the lessons it has taught. It may be that the jeering crowd will point in scorn as they see us with the grewsome figure at our side, but when we fully learn the lesson that it came to teach, we shall need to look no more without for the approval or disapproval of our acts, but seek to satisfy ourselves alone. Let us place a new chair beside the hearth, in the cosiest nook, and bid the skeleton take its place as the worthiest guest. Let us neither parade nor hide our new-found friend, but treat it as a fact of life—a fact that is, a fact that had the right to be, and a fact that taught us how to find ourselves. Let us not forget the

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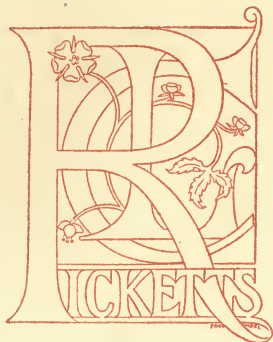
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parents, who watch us in our youth, and the friends that were ever good and true. But above all, let us remember this grim and silent teacher, who never neglected or forgot, who showed us life as only it could show, who opened up new vistas to our soul, who touched our human hearts, who made us know and love our fellowman, who softened and mellowed and purified our souls until we felt the kinship that we bore to all living things. Until it came we knew only the surface of the world. Before it came, we had tasted of the shallow cup of joy and the bitter cup of pain, but we needed this to teach us from the anguish of the soul that there is a depth profound and great, where pain and pleasure both are one. That there is a life so deep and true that earth's rewards and penalties alike are but a hollow show; that there is a conquest of ourselves, which brings perfect peace and perfect rest.







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